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The Defeat of Major General Arthur St. Clair, November 4, 1791: A Study of the Nation's Response, 1791-1793

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THE DEFEAT OF MAJOR GENERAL ARTHUR ST. CLAIR,

NOVEMBER 4, 1791:

A STUDY OF THE NATION'S RESPONSE, 1791-1793

by

William Patrick Walsh

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial
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Finally, the author would like to dedicate this paper to the one person who was indispensable to its completion. His principal counselor, chief critic, constant source of encouragement, expert typist and wife -- Dulcenee.

VITA

The author, William Patrick Walsh, is the son of Vincent I. Walsh and Lucille Anne (McCluskey) Walsh. He was born March 3, 1939, in Chicago, Illinois.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1791, Arthur St. Clair, Governor of the Northwest Territory, and recently appointed Major General of the United States Army, marched northward from Fort Washington, near present day Cincinnati, at the head of 2300 regular soldiers and 300 militia. The object of his mission was to deal a decisive blow against the Indians of the Ohio country which would settle, at long last, a critical situation which had been plaguing the United States government since its inception. The purpose of this paper is to inquire into the impact that this expedition and its fate had upon the American nation. Before examining the nation's response to this mission, however, it will be necessary to describe briefly the events leading up to its formation.

The war with England, resulting in the Treaty of Paris, had led to the United States being granted extensive boundaries stretching west to the Mississippi and north to the Great Lakes. Of particular interest to the newly created United States government was that land comprising the national domain which was located north of the Ohio River. The Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781, had created

a weak central government with insufficient taxing powers to allow it to function properly. To the members of the Confederation government, the new Northwest area was of crucial importance, for, it was hoped, the sale of this land to prospective settlers would provide the economic base necessary to establish a viable central government.¹

Nor were the settlers themselves reluctant to try their fortunes on the rich, inviting lands of the Ohio region. No sooner had the war ended than eager, land hungry pioneers began to move down the Ohio River in search of a new life. At first the flow of settlers was slow and hesitant, but it gradually gained momentum, and, by the end of the first decade of Independence, thousands were moving westward each year.²

¹Reginald Horsman, The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp.30-33; Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812 (Michigan State University Press, 1967), pp.5, 36-37; Horsman, "American Indian Policy in the Old Northwest, 1783-1812," William and Mary Quarterly, XVIII (January, 1961), pp.35-36; Francis S. Philbrick, The Rise of the West, 1754-1830 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp.124, 132-133.

²Philbrick, The Rise of the West, pp.80-103; Horsman, The Frontier in the Formative Years, p.30; Allen S. Brown, "The Role of the Army in Western Settlement: Josiah Harner's Command, 1785-1790," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 93, (April, 1969), p.173; Howard Peckham, "Josiah Harner and His Indian Expedition," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, IV, (July-September, 1946), p.233; L.C. Helderman, "The Northwest Expedition of George Rogers Clark, 1786-1787," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXV, (December, 1938), p.318; Francis Paul Prucha, The Sword of the Republic, the United States on the Frontier, 1783-1846 (London: Macmillan Company, 1969), pp.17-18; Nelson V. Russell, The British Regime in Michigan and the Old North-

It was this attempt to settle the newly acquired western lands that immediately created a crisis situation for the Confederation government. The problem arose in that this land was only nominally under American control.

The area north of the Ohio River that was the object of such interest to the new United States, was at the time occupied by several Indian tribes, such as the Shawanee, Delaware and Miami, who had been allied to the English during the Revolutionary War. [The Treaty of Paris had transferred the British title to the region to the United States.] Congress, however, made the mistake of assuming the Indians would recognize that title and passively retire from the area. Unfortunately for the government's plans, the Indians saw no reason to yield their lands to the United States. They had not been defeated militarily in the war, nor had they ever granted any right of settlement in the area. Further complicating American plans was the fact that Indian military strength north of the Ohio River was considerably greater than that of the United States.³

west (Northfield, 1939), pp.253-254, 259-260; Knox to Har-
mar, July 21, 1788, Harmar Papers, William L. Clements Library;
Harmar to Capt. Jonathon Heart, July 28, 1788, Ibid.

³ A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace After the War of 1812 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp.85-105; Reginald Horsman, The Frontier in the Formative Years, pp.30-36; Reginald Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, pp.3-12; Reginald Horsman, "American Indian Policy," pp.35-40; Francis

Compounding the difficulties presented by this Indian barrier to expansion, was the continued English presence in the Northwest. No sooner had the war with Great Britain ended, than the English government realized that it had committed a serious error at the bargaining table. In their haste to conclude the war with the United States, the English negotiators had granted to the Americans lands that were of considerable importance to the well-being of their settlements in Canada.

The English, by granting the land immediately south of the Great Lakes to the United States, had deprived Canada of its control over the valuable fur trade of the region. Immediately, pressures were placed upon the English government by affected merchants and traders to renegotiate the settlement ending the war. These pressures caused the English government to reconsider their hasty decision at Paris and to search for a way to maintain control over the Northwest.⁴

Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp.32-33; Walter H. Mohr, Federal Indian Relations, 1774-1788 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), pp.93-138; Orpha E. Leavitt, "British Policy on the Canadian Frontier, 1782-1792: Mediation and An Indian Barrier State," Wisconsin Historical Publications, Proceedings, 1915, pp.154-155; Harry M. Ward, The Department of War, 1781-1795 (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), pp.55-56.

⁴ Benjamin Frobisher to Adam Mabane, April 19, 1784, Haldimand Papers, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XX, pp.219-222. (Hereinafter referred to as Haldimand

More serious than loss of the fur trade to British officials in Canada, however, was the Indian threat created by the land cession. The tribes of the Northwest, which had been allies of the English during the Revolution, looked upon the Treaty of Paris as an English betrayal. In exchange for their efforts on England's behalf during the war, they had been rewarded by having their lands given to the enemy.

This understandable attitude on the part of the Northwest tribes led to a corresponding fear on the part of the English government that their former allies might turn on them and lay waste to British settlements in Canada. It became a matter of the highest priority to convince the Indians that they had not been betrayed, and in fact were still highly prized allies and friends of the

Papers, MPHC.) Gov. Frederick Haldimand to Captain Robertson, May 6, 1784, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, pp.226-227. For evidence of the continuing importance of the fur trade see: The Merchants of Montreal to Simcoe, December 9, 1791, in E.A. Cruikshank, ed., The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada (Toronto: 1923), I, pp.91-94. (Hereinafter referred to as Simcoe Papers.); From the Merchants of Montreal to J.G. Simcoe, April 23, 1792, Simcoe Papers, I, pp.133-137. Also see: Samuel Flag Bemis, Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), rev. ed., pp.5-10; Mohr, Federal Indian Relations, pp.93-94; A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, pp.85-105; Russell, The British Regime in Michigan and the Old Northwest, p.238; Leavitt, "British Policy on the Canadian Frontier," p.15; Fred Landon, Western Ontario and the American Frontier (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1941), p.6; Andrew C. McLaughlin, "The Western Posts and British Debts," American Historical Association, Annual Report for 1894, (Washington: 1895).

English government.⁵

Thus, motivated both by a desire to retain the fur trade and to prevent an Indian uprising, the English government determined to retain possession of their line of military Posts located south of the newly established American-Canadian border. England had promised to surrender these Northwest Posts in the Treaty of Paris, but soon found justification for retaining them by claiming that prior violations of the Treaty had taken place on the American's side. It was argued that the failure to restore the property of the loyalists and to pay the debts owed to British merchants, freed England from her promise to relinquish the Posts.⁶

⁵General Haldimand to Hon. Thomas Townshend, October 23, 1782, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, X, pp.662-664; Transactions with the Indians at Sandusky, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, pp.174-183; Maclean to Haldimand, May 18, 1783, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, pp.117-119; Haldimand to Sir John Johnson, May 26, 1783, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, pp.123-124; Brig. Allan Maclean to Lt. Col. Arent S. De Peyster, June 26, 1783, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, pp.130-131; Major Arent S. De Peyster to Brig. General Allan Maclean, June 18, 1783, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, p.128; Brig. Gen. Allan Maclean to Gen. Frederick Haldimand, July 17, 1783, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, pp.146-147; Brig. Gen. Allan Maclean to Lt. Col. Arent S. De Peyster, July 8, 1783, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, pp.138-140; Brig. Gen. Allan Maclean to General Frederick Haldimand, July 19, 1783, Haldimand Papers, MPHC, XX, pp.149-150; General Haldimand to Lord North, August 6, 1783, MPHC, XI, pp.378-379. See also: Orpha Leavitt, "British Policy on the Canadian Frontier," pp.152-155; A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, pp.82-105; Bemis, Jay's Treaty, p.8; Nelson, The British Regime, pp.232-233.

⁶Philbrick, The Rise of the West, pp.134-136; Orpha Leavitt, "British Policy on the Canadian Frontier," p.158; A.

The retention of the Posts became a symbol of British determination to protect both the rights of the Indians and the economic well-being of the fur trading interests of Canada. So long as the Posts were maintained by the English, not only would the fur trade be maintained but the British could pose as the allies of the tribes of the American Northwest. Conversely, any retreat from these Northwest Posts could lead to the destruction of British Canada by disgruntled Indian warriors.⁷

From these Posts, the English offered diplomatic and material support to the tribes which only increased their opposition to American advances. And, this opposition went almost unchecked by the national government. The impotence of the new nation was apparent to all in the government's inability to exercise control over its own territory. The American army was virtually non-existent during these years of the Confederation government and

L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, pp.82-105; Bemis, Jay's Treaty, pp.10-11; Nelson, The British Regime, pp.241-242.

⁷A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain, and British North America, pp.82-105; C.S. Graham, "The Indian Menace and the Retention of the Western Posts," Canadian Historical Review, XV. (March, 1934), pp.46-48; Orpha Leavitt, "British Policy on the Canadian Frontier," p.157; Nelson, The British Regime, pp.234-240. Also see: Simcoe's reflections on the problems of the posts in Simcoe to Hammond, September 27, 1792, Colonial Office Records, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXIV, pp.478-482. (Hereinafter referred to as C.O.R., MPHC.)

prospects for the future development of a force sufficient to allow the government to expel the English and subdue the Indians were not bright. Loyalty to the national government among western settlers would be severely shaken by this inability to protect its citizens from Indian attack and British intrigue.⁸

The fear that the Western territories might separate themselves from the nation was of growing concern to the government. The inability of the government to protect the settlers against Indian attack, and the continuing British possession of the Northwest Posts were the major, but not the only, problems behind this sentiment. Western problems for the Confederation were further compounded by the Spanish intrigue in the South and the Southwest. To even a greater extent than the English in the North, the Spanish were encouraging and openly aiding the Indians of the South to oppose American settlement. In addition, the Spanish possession of the mouth of the Mississippi placed a strangle hold upon the economic development of the West. In this position of strength, the Spanish were offering the frontier settlers peace with the Indians and free use of the Mississippi in exchange for their secession

⁸For basic information on British-American relations during this period see: A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America; Bemis, Jay's Treaty; Charles Ritcheson, Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783-1795 (Dallas: Southern Metho-

from the United States.⁹ All the above factors, combined with a growing feeling in the West that the Eastern portion of the Nation cared little for Western development made the question of retaining the Western country within the government of the United States, of increasing concern to the Congress.¹⁰

In the face of these obstacles the Confederation government set about establishing its Northwestern Indian policy. The basic assumption of that policy was that victory over the British and the subsequent Treaty of Paris granted the United States complete and unquestioned ownership of all lands heretofore held by the Indians. The Indian tenancy had been negated both by their aid to the

dist University Press, 1969).

⁹ For basic information on Spanish-American relations during this period see: Arthur P. Whitaker, The Spanish-American Frontier, 1783-1795 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, Co., 1927); Arthur P. Darling, Our Rising Empire, 1763-1803 (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1962).

¹⁰ The negotiation of the Jay-Gardoqui Treaty with Spain, for example, led to the development of a secessionist sentiment in the West. By the terms of this treaty the United States would yield the use of the Mississippi in exchange for trade concessions. For additional information regarding the movements for separation from the Union see: Rufus Putnam to Fisher Ames, 1790, Rowena Buell, ed., The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam (New York: 1903), pp.234-247; Ames to Putnam, February 22, 1791, Ibid., pp.250-251; F. Clever Bald, "Colonel John Francis Hamtramck," Indiana Magazine of History, XLIV (December, 1948), p.343; Philbrick, The Rise of the West, p.128; Gayle Thornborough, ed., Outpost on the Wabash, 1787-1791: Letters of Brigadier General Josiah Harmer and Major John Francis Hamtramck (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1957), p.12; Dale Van Every, Ark of Empire: The American Frontier, 1784-1803 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp.174-176.

British during the war and by the terms of the Treaty itself. This being the case the Indians had forfeited all rights to the soil and only lived upon it at the pleasure of the United States.

It was on this basis that the Confederation government adopted a militant and aggressive attitude toward the Western tribes. The Indians were informed that they were a conquered people who could live on the land only due to the benevolence and generosity of the American government.¹¹ The result of this American Indian Policy was to create a situation of virtually constant hostilities across the frontier.

The government, using threats filled with bluff and bluster, was able to obtain treaties from a number of western tribes. But, it would be unfair to say that these treaties were negotiated in any real sense of the term. The tribes were told that they must agree to withdraw from lands illegally held by them, or suffer destruction at the hands of the United States Army. Thus, agreements were made such as the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784 with the

¹¹Horsman, "American Indian Policy in the Old Northwest," pp.35-40; Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, pp.3-15; Horsman, The Frontier in the Formative Years, p.35; Brown, "The Role of the Army in Western Settlement," p.167; Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp.32-33; Van Every, Ark of Empire, p.12; Randolph C. Downes, Council Fires on the Upper Ohio: A Narrative of Indian Affairs in the Upper Ohio Valley until 1795 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1940), pp.277-278, 284-288; Philbrick, The Rise of the West, pp.139-140.

Iroquois, and the Treaty of Fort McIntosh in 1785 with factions of the Wyandots, Delawares, Chippewas and Ottawas.¹² The truth was, however, that the pitifully small American Army was unable to defend the few small posts it maintained on the frontier, much less enforce harsh treaty provisions upon the Indians.¹³ The net result of these treaties was negative. The Indians were naturally angered at their treatment, soon repudiated them, and renewed opposition to American advance.

The last years of the Confederation government did see a gradual change in American policy. Realizing the failure of its original harsh stance toward the Northwestern tribes, the government modified its position some-

¹²Peckham, "Josiah Harmar and His Indian Expedition," p.231; Philbrick, The Rise of the West, p.140; Brown, "The Role of the Army in Western Settlement," pp.165-167; Thornborough, Outpost on the Wabash, pp.9-10; Nevil B. Craig, ed., The Olden Time (2 vols.; Pittsburgh, 1848, reprinted Cincinnati, 1876). This work contains General Butler's Journal; Van Every, Ark of Empire, pp.51, 55, 57-58; Downes, Council Fires, pp.289-293, 295-296, 299; Horsman, Frontier in the Formative Years, p.35; Prucha, The Sword of the Republic, p.9; Prucha, American Indian Policy, pp.33-34.

¹³Bald, "Colonel John Francis Hamtramck," pp.335-354; Peckham, "Josiah Harmar and His Indian Expedition," pp.227-241; Brown, "The Role of the Army in Western Settlement," pp.161-178; Helderman, "The Northwest Expedition of George Rogers Clark," pp.317-334; Ward, The Department of War; John Parker Huber, "General Josiah Harmar's Command: Military Policy in the Old Northwest, 1784-1791," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968); Thornborough, Outpost on the Wabash, pp.12-13; Prucha, The Sword of the Republic, pp.6-7, 9-13, 19; John C. Miller, Alexander Hamilton and the Growth of the New Nation (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p.143; Van Every, Ark of Empire, pp.12-13.

what. While still denying Indian rights to the land, the government decided to pay the Indians who were willing to surrender lands desired by the United States. It was this policy that eventuated in the Treaties of Fort Harmar early in 1789. These treaties, however, did nothing more than reaffirm provisions of earlier agreements, and, like them, were soon repudiated.¹⁴

In spite of Indian intransigence, the Confederation government, anxious both to realize a monetary return from sale of western lands, and anxious to stem the rising chorus of complaints from the West, did pass significant legislation for the organization, sale and government of the Northwest, culminating in the famous Northwest Ordinance of 1787. And, the immediate sale of vast tracts of land along the Ohio River to the newly formed Ohio Company tends to emphasize the eagerness with which the American people looked to the settlement of the Ohio Country.¹⁵ More importantly, it

¹⁴In 1789, two treaties were signed, each confirming earlier treaties with the Indians. One treaty, with the Wyandots, Delawares, Potawatomis, Ottawas and Sacs reconfirmed the Treaty of Fort McIntosh, 1785. The second treaty was with the Six Nations and reconfirmed the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. This time, however, the Indians were compensated for their cessions in the amount of \$9,000.

¹⁵Horsman, The Frontier in the Formative Years, pp.36-37; Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, pp.42-43; Philbrick, The Rise of the West, pp.124-125; Archer Butler Hulbert, ed., The Records of the Original Proceedings of the Ohio Company, I, (Marietta, Ohio: Marietta Historical Commission, 1917).

meant that the government had formally sanctioned settlement north of the River and thus assumed an even more immediate obligation to pacify the frontier.

When George Washington took office as the first President under the new Federal government in 1789, the problems of the Northwestern frontier were no better and in many ways worse than they had been in 1783. British possession of the Northwest Posts, Spanish intrigue in the Southwest, increasing Indian hostilities along the Ohio frontier and persistent rumors of secession in the western territories created a crisis situation for the Administration, and the government approached the problem with a sense of urgency.

The policy of the new Administration was to avoid war, if at all possible, while still seeking to secure control of the Indian lands through negotiation. Not only did the continuing precarious financial situation of the nation prohibit large scale defense spending, but, it was believed, that the goals of the Administration could more easily be obtained peacefully. A treaty, no matter how much money it might cost by way of gifts and annuities to the Indians, would still be far less expensive than a war. In addition, once settlement did take place, wildlife upon which the Indian depended, would be forced to retreat from the surrounding area. This, in turn, would force the Indian further back into the wilderness. This would make

it easier for the settler to invade this abandoned area. Eventually, the Indian would be forced to leave the region entirely.¹⁶

The choice of negotiation rather than outright war as the proper method of solving the frontier problems was also based upon an American concern over the righteousness of its position. The President, for example, doubted the wisdom of an all out war against the Indians and stressed the need to negotiate differences with those people. Any precipitous move toward war on the part of the United States would, he believed, be difficult to justify.¹⁷ Similarly, the Secretary of War, Henry Knox, believed that the lands of the Indians could only be taken from them with their consent, or as the result of a just war. That is, a war brought on by continuing Indian depredations and refusals to negotiate.¹⁸ Thus, the new government's policy was to negotiate with the Indians for their lands, both because it was morally correct and because it was the expedient thing to do.

¹⁶ Horsman, "American Indian Policy," p.37; Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, pp.3-15; Washington to Congress, August 7, 1789, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, pp.12-13. (Hereinafter referred to as A.S.P., I.A.).

¹⁷ Instructions from the President of the United States, October 6, 1789, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.97.

¹⁸ Washington to Congress, August 7, 1789, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.12-13; Horsman, "American Indian Policy," pp.42-44.

Unfortunately for the success of the government's policy, the settlers themselves were impatient. They could not or would not await the outcome of lengthy, perhaps futile negotiations between the Tribes and a distant government which they were none to sure was looking out for their interests. The people of the frontier were increasingly restive in the face of frequent attacks, and, these attacks grew in frequency as more and more people began to cross the Ohio border. Soon, the threat of a chaotic full scale war on the frontier precipitated by attacks from an increasingly irate Kentucky citizenry was a real possibility. "It is not to be expected," stated the Governor of the Northwest Territory, Arthur St. Clair, "that the Kentucky people will or can submit patiently to the cruelties and deprivations [sic] of those savages."¹⁹ The settlers, according to the Governor, would probably launch their own attacks if the national government did not act soon.²⁰

The fear of a frontier war brought on by settlers who were disgusted at the lack of national support they were receiving, and who spoke more openly of the possibility

¹⁹Governor St. Clair to the President, September 14, 1789, William Henry Smith, ed., The St. Clair Papers (Reprint edition, Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), II, pp.123-124. (Hereinafter referred to as Smith, St. Clair Papers.).

²⁰Ibid.

of separation from the nation, led Governor St. Clair to recommend, and Congress to approve, the use of the Virginia and Kentucky militias if the Governor should deem it essential to maintain order on the frontier.²¹ This was to "tend to conciliate the western people by showing them that they were not unattended to. . . ." ²² Following its continuing desires to avoid war if at all possible, however, the Administration cautioned St. Clair that the militia was to be used only if all attempts at a peaceful solution failed. An Indian war was "to be avoided by all means consistently with the security of the frontier inhabitants, the security of the troops, and the national dignity."²³

Hopes for peace continued to fade, however, as the tenor of the news from the frontier became increasingly alarming. A group of Indian warriors or "banditti" as the government referred to them, had infested the region along

²¹"Instructions from the President of the United States to the Governor of the Western Territory," October 6, 1789, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.96-97; "Report to the Senate," September 16, 1789, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, XXX, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), p.405; Governor St. Clair to the President, September 14, 1789, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, p.123-124; Knox to St. Clair, September 28, 1789, Northwest Territory Papers, Clements Library.

²²Governor St. Clair to the President, September 14, 1789, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.123-124.

²³"Instructions from the President of the United States," October 6, 1789, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.97.

the Ohio River where the situation became so perilous that certain frontier leaders feared all traffic on the River might be brought to a halt.²⁴ In an attempt to quell the growing chorus of complaints from the West, the government reluctantly assumed the expense of paying for frontier scouts in the endangered areas.²⁵ These scouts would afford a modicum of protection for the beleaguered settlers, as well as offering them at least a token of the concern felt for them in the Administration.

Meanwhile the government had authorized St. Clair to

²⁴Wilkinson to Harmar, April 7, 1790, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; "Summary Statement of the Situation of the Frontiers by the Secretary of War," May 27, 1790, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.146-147; General Knox to Governor St. Clair, June 7, 1790, Ibid., pp.147-148; Major Hamtramck to Governor St. Clair, April 19, 1790, Ibid., p.135; "Representations from the Field Officers of Harrison County, Virginia," February 2, 1790, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.87; "Letters relating to Indian Raids," Ibid., pp.89-90; Harmar to Knox, June 9, 1790, Ibid., p.91; Wilkinson to Harmar, April 7, Ibid., pp.91-92; Knox to Harmar, June 7, 1790, Ibid., pp.97-98; Judge Putnam to the President, July 24, 1790, Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., The Territorial Papers of the United States, II, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), pp.293-294. (Hereinafter referred to as Territorial Papers.); Douglas S. Freeman, George Washington: A Biography, VI, Patriot and President (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), pp.271-272.

²⁵Knox to Harmar, April 13, 1790, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; Knox to St. Clair, March 3, 1790, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; Randolph C. Downes, Frontier Ohio, 1788-1803 (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1935), p.21. See also "Address of General Assembly of Virginia to President Washington," A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.84-85; "Address from Representatives of the Frontier Counties of Virginia to Washington," Ibid., pp.85-86; Knox to Judge Innes, April 13, 1790, Ibid., pp.101-102.

attempt to negotiate a peace with the western Indians. Even before the mission began, however, the Governor's pessimism was evident, as he wrote the Secretary of War, Henry Knox, that "The Miami's, and the renegade Shawanese [sic], Delawares, and Cherokees. . .I fear are irreclaimable by gentle means."²⁶ This pessimism was soon born out by events.

The mission met with Indian intransigence to any peace plan proposed by the United States, unless the United States would negotiate on the basis of the Ohio River as a boundary for settlement. Furthermore, the danger of the British retention of the Northwest Posts was evident as the tribes refused to negotiate until they had an opportunity to confer with their British allies at Detroit.²⁷

It was the failure of this peace effort combined with the continuing hostilities on the frontier that led St. Clair to recommend war with the Indians believed most guilty -- those whose villages were along the Wabash River. "It is to be feared," he informed Secretary Knox, "that

²⁶ Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of War, January 26, 1790, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.132-133.

²⁷ "Mr. Gamelin's Journal," Ibid., Note 1, pp.155-160. For additional information on the American attempt to negotiate peace see Major Hamtramck to Governor St. Clair, March 19, 1790, Ibid., Note 1, p.132; Major Hamtramck to Governor St. Clair, Ibid., p.135; Governor St. Clair to May 1, 1790, St. Clair Papers, State Library of Ohio; Knox to Harmer, June 7, 1790, Harmer Papers, Clements Library; Bald, "Colonel John Francis Hamtramck," pp.345-346. For St. Clair's activities in the Illinois Country see "Governor St. Clair to the President, Report of Official Proceedings in the Illinois Country from March 5th to June 11th, 1790," Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.164-180.

the United States must prepare effectually to chastise them, and the consequence of not doing it may, very probably, be the defection of those who are now at peace with the entire loss of the affections of the people of the frontiers."²⁸

Faced with the ever growing demands from the frontier for aid, the increasing belligerence of the Tribes and the refusal of the Indians to accept the American concept of just negotiation, the Administration reluctantly accepted St. Clair's recommendation. Instructions were issued that an expedition was to be launched "to exhibit to the Wabash Indians our power to punish them for their positive depredations, for their conniving at the depredations of others and for their refusing to treat with the United States when invited thereto."²⁹

Command of this proposed expedition was given to a veteran of the frontier experience, Brevet General Josiah Harmar. The plan of attack made by Harmar in consultation with Governor St. Clair, called for a main body of men to march from Fort Washington, near present Cincinnati, north-

²⁸ Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of War, May 1, 1790, St. Clair Papers, State Library of Ohio; Bald, "Colonel John Francis Hamtramck," pp.345-346.

²⁹ General Knox to Governor St. Clair, September 14, 1790, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.181-183; Knox to Harmar June 7, 1790, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; Knox to Harmar, August 24, 1790, Ibid.; St. Clair to Harmar, October 1, 1790, Ibid.; General Knox to Governor St. Clair, August 23, 1790, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.162-163.

ward towards the villages of the Miami tribes. Meanwhile, a smaller force consisting of approximately 300 militia and a handful of regulars was to march northeastward from Fort Knox on the Wabash, under the command of Major John Francis Hamtramck.³⁰

That the expedition would not proceed smoothly was early indicated by the low caliber of militia who composed the major portion of Harmar's force. It was not the hardy self-sufficient frontiersmen who reported for duty, but a mixture of young boys, old men, and undesirables, few of whom were properly armed or physically prepared for such an undertaking. Nor were many of the militia officers of high caliber. Disputes among them, leading to threats of mutiny if certain favorites were not given commands, boded ill for the successful completion of the mission.³¹

The main force left Fort Washington on September 26,

³⁰ Bald, "Colonel John Francis Hamtramck," p.346; Thornborough, Outpost on the Wabash, pp.18-19; Knox to Harmar, September 14, 1790, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; Hamtramck to Harmar, November 2, 1790, Ibid.; Harmar to Hamtramck, January 15, 1791, in Thornborough, Outpost on the Wabash, p.269; Knox to Harmar, September 3, 1790, Knox Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Ward, The Department of War, pp.126-131.

³¹ St. Clair to Harmar, May 2, 1790, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; Knox to Harmar, September 3, 1790, Ibid.; St. Clair to Harmar, September 25, 1790, Ibid.; Court of Inquiry of General Harmar, American State Papers, Military Affairs, I, pp.20-37; "Proceedings of a court of Inquiry Held at Fort Washington, September 15, 1791. . . ." Frontier War MSS, vol.4, Draper Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

1790, and making very slow progress, did not reach the Indian villages until October 17. Finding the villages deserted, Harmar had to content himself with burning them and whatever supplies of corn he found there. Twice, he sent out detached units in an attempt to make contact with the main Indian forces, and each time they were ambushed by the waiting warriors. In both instances the militia panicked and ran, leaving the regulars to the mercy of the Indians. The result was that Harmar lost 183 dead and 31 wounded. At this point, realizing the total undependability of the militia and faced with serious shortages of supplies, Harmar decided to withdraw.³²

Meanwhile Major Hamtramck's force from Fort Knox was having troubles of its own. Severe shortages of supply combined with a lack of discipline among the militia forced the Major to return to his post without having seen a single Indian warrior.³³

³²Harmar to Hamtramck, November 29, 1790, in Thornborough, Outpost on the Wabash, p.268; Knox to Harmar, January 31, 1791, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; James Backus to Woodbridge, November 24, 1790, Woodbridge Papers, Detroit Public Library; "Thomas Bourne's Narrative of Harmar's Campaign," Frontier War MSS, vol.4, Draper Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society; "Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry Held at Fort Washington, September 15, 1791. . . ,"
Ibid.; Court of Inquiry of General Harmar, American State Papers, Military Affairs, I, pp.20-37; Beverley W. Bond, Jr., ed., Memoirs of Benjamin Van Cleve, XVII, Quarterly Publications of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, pp.17-18.

³³Hamtramck to Harmar, November 2, 1790, in Thorn-

Word of the expedition was anxiously awaited in the nation's capital. But, as days passed into weeks without a word from the frontier, all hope of a successful outcome of the expedition was gradually abandoned. The President soon came to the conclusion that there was little doubt but that the mission had led to

a disgraceful termination under the conduct of B. Genl. Harmar. I expected little from the moment I heard he was a drunkard. I expected less as soon as I heard that on this account no confidence was reposed in him by the people of the Western Country. And I gave up all hope of Success as soon as I heard that there were disputes with him about command.³⁴

The President's assessment of Harmar's performance proved to be a hasty and an inaccurate one. The fault was partially Harmar's in that he should not have sent out detached units in search of the Indian warriors. The very reason he was given so large a force was owing to the acknowledged need of such numbers to defeat the Indians. However, a court of inquiry later found Harmar innocent on all charges of drunkenness and poor leadership. The fault lay less with Harmar than with the poorly trained and poorly equipped militia upon whom he had to depend.³⁵

borough, Outpost on the Wabash, pp.259-264; Harmar to Knox, December 4, 1790, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; Bald, "Colonel John Francis Hamtramck," pp.335-354.

³⁴ President to the Secretary of War, November 19, 1790, Territorial Papers, II, p.310. (Emphasis Washington's).

³⁵ Court of Inquiry of General Harmar, American State Papers, Military Affairs, I, pp.20-37; "Proceedings of a

Harmer had long and meritorious service on the frontier, and ill-deserved Washington's accusations. Perhaps, the strong reaction of the President was owing to the importance he placed upon the restoration of peace on the frontier. He had hoped that the launching of an expedition of this size would solve the frontier problem once and for all, and the depth of his disappointment was great.

Whatever the cause of the defeat, however, there was no doubt as to its result. The situation of the settler on the frontier became more desperate than ever before. The Indians, elated over their ability to stop the largest army the United States possessed, boasted that "there should not remain a Smoak [sic] on the ohio [sic] by the time the Leaves put out."³⁶ Petitions pleading for help for the frontier began to arrive on the desks of government officials once again. For the Indians "instead of being humbled. . . appear ditermined [sic] on a general War. . . ." ³⁷

Court of Inquiry Held at Fort Washington, September 15, 1791. . . , "Frontier War MSS, vol.4, Draper Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Knox to Harmer, January 31, 1791, Harmer Papers, Clements Library; Asheton to Harmer, July 20, 1791, Ibid.; Lt. Armstrong to Harmer, March 1, 1791, Ibid.; Major Ferguson to Harmer, March 28, 1791, Ibid.

³⁶ Buell, The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam, p.113.

³⁷ Rufus Putnam esq., to the President, January 8, 1791, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.121-122; Judge Putnam to the President, February 28, 1791, Territorial Papers, II, pp.337-339; Buell, The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam, p.113. For an indication of the problems facing the frontier following Har-

The government agreed with these assessments of the frontier situation since they too realized that rather than peace the result of the Harmar expedition was to "encourage then [the Indians] to a continuance of hostilities."³⁸ The only decision the Secretary of War could make, therefore, was that "another and more effectual expedition must be undertaken."³⁹ Knox's recommendations for such an expedition, endorsed by the President, were submitted to Congress early in 1791, and hastily approved. An army, twice the size that Harmar's had been, and composed mostly of regulars, was authorized. In addition, Congress appropriated more than \$300,000 for the War Department to finance the expedition. Arthur St. Clair, Governor of the Northwest Territory, and possessed of considerable military experience dating from the French-Indian War, was commissioned

mar's defeat see also Harmar to Hamtramck, January 15, 1791, in Thronborough, Outpost on the Wabash, pp.269-272; Hamtramck to Harmar, January 28, 1791, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; Hamtramck to Harmar, May 9, 1791, Ibid.; Petition from Dunlap's Station, January 16, 1791, Ibid.; Petition for Help to Harmar from Bethany Town, February 28, 1791, Ibid.; Col. Levi Todd and Robert Johnson from Lexington, November 20, 1790, Ibid.; Petition from Citizens of Clarksville, December 3, 1790, Ibid.; Lt. Kingsbury from Dunlap Station, January 12, 1791, Ibid.; James Backus to Woodbridge, November 24, 1790, Woodbridge Papers, Detroit public Library; Van Every, Ark of Empire, pp.226-227.

³⁸ Knox to Harmar, January 31, 1791, Harmar Papers, Clements Library.

³⁹ Ibid.

Major-General and was to command the new army.⁴⁰

The great length of time it would take to prepare the army to march led the government to further decide that small scale raids ought to be launched into the Indian country. This was to be done in order to take pressure off the frontier settlements as well as to weaken the tribes' will to resist St. Clair's force when it eventually marched.

In all, two such raids were undertaken. The first, under the command of Brigadier General Charles Scott, was sent against the Indian towns of the upper Wabash River. Scott's force, composed of approximately 700 Kentucky militia, managed to destroy four or five villages, kill thirty Indians and capture fifty-eight.⁴¹ This raid did sufficient damage to further incense the tribes against the American settlers, but not enough to bring them to the bargaining table or to weaken their ability to resist.

The second raid, under the leadership of Major General James Wilkinson, likewise was sent against Indian villages along the Wabash, with orders to capture "as many

⁴⁰Report from Knox to Washington, January 22, 1791, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.112-113; Washington to Darke, April 4, 1791, Fitzpatrick, Washington Writings, XXXI, pp.268-270; Knox to Harmar, March 18, 1791, Harmar Papers, Clements Library; St. Clair's Instructions are found in A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.171-174. See also Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, Note 2, p.200.

⁴¹St. Clair to Knox, May 26, 1791, Smith, St. Clair Papers, pp.212-216; St. Clair to Committee of Kentucky, June 24, 1791, Ibid., pp.222-223; Downes, Frontier Ohio, p.28.

as possible, particularly women and children." Wilkinson met with limited success, managing to capture thirty-four in the principal Wabash village. However, following this initial success, Wilkinson's expedition became lost in a series of bogs and marshes and, discouraged, returned home without further success.⁴²

While preparing to destroy the Indian on the battlefield, the government at the same time was attempting to secure a peaceable settlement with the tribes through negotiation. Joseph Brant, for example, was approached during this summer of 1791, in an attempt to use him as an envoy of peace to the western tribes. His job was to convince the Indians of America's pacific intentions, however, news of the Scott-Wilkinson expeditions destroyed all possibilities of this attempt being successful.⁴³

The fact of the matter was that the government wanted the impossible. They wanted the Indian lands, and they wanted them peacefully. Throughout this period the government was torn between its desire for peace on the western frontier and its desire to stem the rising chorus of complaints arising from the frontier regarding the westerners' concern that the government was indifferent

⁴² General St. Clair to General Wilkinson, July 31, 1791, Instructions Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.227-229; General Wilkinson to General St. Clair, August 24, 1791, Ibid., pp.233-239.

⁴³ Van Every, Ark of Empire, pp.228-229.

to its needs. This as much as anything explains the virtually schizophrenic nature of American policy. At the same time that the Indians were being assured the United States wanted no more land, but only lasting peace, the people of the frontier were being informed that "The United States embrace, with equal care, all parts of the Union; and, in the present case, are making expensive arrangements for the protection of the frontiers. . . ."⁴⁴ Under the circumstances, it was small wonder that negotiations consistently failed and war constantly recurred.

Meanwhile, St. Clair was attempting to prepare the main force. The summer of 1791 was one of intense frustration for the governor. Delay after delay ensued, making it impossible for him to march on the heels of the Scott and Wilkinson raids as had originally been hoped. St. Clair's army would not be ready to march until October, and even then was really not prepared to do so effectively.

The reasons for the delays were manifold. The army was slow to assemble and when it did confusion, disorganization and a lack of discipline were the orders of the day. There were extraordinary problems arising from the quartermaster corps -- problems which would continue throughout the ensuing campaign. There were deficiencies in every

⁴⁴"Instructions to St. Clair from Knox, March 21, 1791," A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.171-174.

area -- poor quality gunpowder, insufficient quantities of food, inadequate numbers of pack horses. All these delays prevented the army from marching until October -- at a time when the available forage for horses and livestock was rapidly disappearing.⁴⁵

Pursuant to instructions to build a chain of forts between Fort Washington and the Miamis' Indian villages, St. Clair's army constructed its first fort several miles from their base and called it Fort Hamilton.⁴⁶ This having been completed, the army began its march northward on October 4, 1791, under the temporary command of General Richard Butler.

It soon became evident that the problems which

⁴⁵Knox to Richard Butler, July 7, 1791, St. Clair Papers, Ohio State Library; Knox to Richard Butler, July 21, 1791, Ibid.; Knox to Richard Butler, August 4, 1791, Ibid.; Knox to Butler, August 11, 1791, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.230-231; St. Clair Order Book, August 6, 1791, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Arthur St. Clair, A Narrative of the Manner in Which the Campaign Against the Indians in 1791 Was Conducted. . . . (Philadelphia: 1812), pp.12, 21, 42, 72, 87, 147, 151, 163, 199, 201, 207, 213; Downes, Frontier Ohio, p.30. Much additional information on organizational and supply problems may be found in St. Clair to Knox, July 19, 1791, Knox Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; St. Clair to Knox, August 1, 1791, Ibid.; St. Clair to Knox, August 9, 1791, Ibid.; St. Clair to Knox, September 4, 1791, Ibid.; St. Clair to Knox, September 23, 1791, Ibid.; St. Clair Order Book, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Adjutant Crawford's Orderly Book, Detroit Public Library; "Captain Newman's Journal," Frontier War MSS, vol.4, Draper Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

⁴⁶"Instructions to St. Clair from Knox, March 21, 1791," A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.171-174. See also St. Clair's Order Book, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

plagued the army in preparation for the event would continue to vex it on the march. Desertions were many, supplies slow to arrive or simply not arriving at all, and with the livestock that had to be brought along as a food supply, the march went painfully slow.⁴⁷

St. Clair, who had been forced to remain behind due to last minute organizational problems, caught up with his army on October 8, 1791, only to find that the army was averaging less than four miles a day. Even more serious, he found a deficiency in supplies, and one of his first actions entailed the cutting of the liquor ration to the men, owing to that deficiency. But, a far more significant deficiency had appeared -- the army was running short of flour as well. The delays in delivering these supplies were inexcusable according to St. Clair, and the contractor would have to answer to "a starving army and a dissappointed [sic] people."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Prucha, The Sword of the Republic, pp.24-25; Downes, Frontier Ohio, p.29; Downes, Council Fires, p.318; Van Every, Ark of Empire, p.232; Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, p.116; General St. Clair to Secretary Knox, October 6, 1791, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.245-246; Adjutant Crawford's Orderly Book, Detroit Public Library.

⁴⁸ General St. Clair to Israel Ludlow, Agent of the Contractors, [extract] October 8, 1791, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.246-247; "Diary of Major Ebenezer Denny, Aid-de-Camp to Major General St. Clair," Ibid., pp.251-262; St. Clair's Order Book, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

The army marched on October 9, 1791, and having covered about 26 miles, encamped again on October 13, and proceeded to construct Fort Jefferson. Here they stayed until October 24. During this stay the cohesion of the army, if any ever existed, began to dissolve as one problem after another beset it. First, the weather turned bad, beginning with heavy rains and lasting for days. This was followed by bitter cold which froze the water and damaged the feed for the livestock. This in turn made it necessary for half the army to turn out each day in order to gather grass from the prairie to serve the horses and cattle overnight. Then, the inadequate supply system had its effects once more as it was necessary to reduce the flour rations to the men by one-half. This in turn was compensated for by increasing the beef ration. Furthermore, by October 16, 1791, the enlistments of many of the troops were beginning to expire and these were demanding their discharge. These circumstances caused many to desert, which in turn led to the drastic measure of sentencing captured deserters to death. Finally, as though there were not problems enough, St. Clair himself fell ill, and this illness kept him weak and, at times, bedridden for the remainder of the campaign.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ St. Clair to Knox, October 10, 1791, Knox Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; St. Clair to Knox, October 17, 1791, Ibid.; "Diary of Major Ebenezer Denny, Aide-Camp to Major General St. Clair," Smith, St. Clair Papers,

In spite of these many difficulties the army was able to resume its march by October 24, 1791 -- but their problems marched with them. Heavy rains kept the force encamped on the 25th and 26th. By the twenty-seventh the army had run out of flour and the last of the forage for the animals began to disappear. Hail and snow began pelting down, the horses were weakening and could no longer keep up with the march, provisions were hand to mouth. October 28 saw the return of a modicum of hope to the ragged forces when a supply train with four days' ration of flour and some new warm clothing arrived in camp. However, while morale was temporarily raised, desertion continued.⁵⁰

On October 30 the march was resumed. The 31st saw more heavy rains and additional shortages in supply -- the march stopped once again to allow the supply train to catch up. Desertions increased with sixty leaving camp en masse. Fearing this large corps of deserters might plunder the supply train, St. Clair made a fateful decision. He ordered the First Regiment, the best trained soldiers he had, back to protect the line of supply and, if possible, to apprehend the deserters. The regimental

II, pp.251-262; General St. Clair to Secretary Knox, Camp, Eighty-one Miles Advanced of Fort Washington, November 1, 1791, Ibid., pp.249-251.

⁵⁰ General St. Clair to the Secretary of War, November 1, 1791, Ibid., pp.249-251; "Diary of Major Denny," Ibid., pp.251-262; St. Clair Order Book, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Adjutant Crawford's Orderly Book, Detroit Library.

commander had been given orders to march twenty miles and if no sign of supply train or deserters appeared, to return to camp. A misunderstanding occurred, however, and the regiment continued its march until it was impossible for it to be of any help when the attack occurred several days later.⁵¹ Thus, on top of his other difficulties the ill-fated St. Clair would be without his best troops when the day of battle arrived.

The army remained in camp on November 1 and resumed its march on the second having left behind much equipment in order to lighten the load on the already weakened horses. The march was slowed by a light snow that fell all day and the army advanced only eight miles. The march on the third carried them an additional nine miles and they encamped late in the day. The encampment chosen was too small to hold the entire force now numbering but 1400 or so and thus the main army was encamped on high ground near a small stream while the militia were on another rise about four hundred and fifty yards away and on the opposite side of the stream.

For some days signs of Indian presence around the advancing army had become numerous. The night of November 3, however, it became obvious that their numbers were becoming alarming in the vicinity of the camp. At about

⁵¹Ibid.

ten o'clock that night, General Butler ordered a reconnaissance to be made outside the camp, led by a Captain Slough, with two subalterns and thirty men. Slough proceeded on his patrol but having encountered small parties of Indians moving through the forests he decided the prudent course would be to return to the camp and relay this information to his superiors. Arriving back in camp about midnight, he reported to a Colonel Oldham that he was of the opinion that the Indians were preparing an early morning attack. Oldham told Slough to report to General Butler immediately and Slough did so. For some reason, however, General Butler did not inform General St. Clair. Thus the commander of the army, due to a rather inconceivable breakdown in communication, was completely unaware of the peril facing his forces.

The attack occurred before dawn, November 4, 1791. Troops had paraded and been dismissed from the lines when the Indians began firing on the militia encamped across the stream. Filled with panic the militia ran back to the main camp causing additional confusion in an already confused situation, and restricting the free field of fire for the artillerists. The Indians' attack was well conceived and carried into execution. Having attacked the front of the American lines, they spread right and left encircling the besieged army.



The Indians appeared fearless of the American fire and continued to advance, falling back occasionally only to regroup and attack with even greater ferocity. Always their primary targets were the artillery men and the officers. Soon the army of the United States found itself without the protection of cannon or the leadership of competent officers. Among the dead was Major General Richard Butler. Soon, it was clear to St. Clair that retreat was the only hope of salvaging his army. Feigning attack, the American army moved against the Indian lines, broke through and literally ran for safety. The retreat was in St. Clair's words "a flight." Although the Indians pursued the fleeing soldiers but four or five miles, the men fled the full twenty-nine miles back to Fort Jefferson by that very night, leaving along the way their rifles, ammunition and anything else that might have delayed their search for the safety of the fort. As for St. Clair's efforts during the campaign, in his own words, "worn down with illness, and suffering under a painful disease, unable either to mount or dismount a horse without assistance, they were not so great as they otherwise would, and perhaps, ought to have been."⁵²

⁵²General St. Clair to the Secretary of War, November 9, 1791, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.262-267; "Diary of Major Denny," Ibid., pp.251-262; "Testimony of Captain Slough of the First Battalion of Levies, Commanded by Major Thomas Butler," Appendix VI, Ibid., pp.633-635;

The United States had suffered an overwhelming defeat. Out of approximately fourteen hundred men, the United States suffered 647 dead, including thirty-five officers, and two hundred and fifty-eight wounded.⁵³

What had been intended as the ultimate show of force which would resolve the Indian problem in the Northwest for once and for all had disastrously backfired. The frontier situation was worse than ever for the settler. The Indians filled with the sense of victory rightfully theirs now began to move against the settlers with greater ferocity than ever, and, "the Indians began to believe themselves [sic] invincible, and they truly had great cause

"Extract from the Testimony of Denny," Appendix VI, Ibid., pp:636-637; Michael McDonough to Patrick McDonough, November 10, 1791, McDonough Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library; "Thomas Irwin's Recollections," Wisconsin State Historical Society; "Captain Newman's Original Journal of St. Clair's Campaign," Ibid.; "St. Clair's Defense," Ibid.; "Charles Wells' Account of St. Clair's Defeat," Ibid.; St. Clair's Order Book, Ibid.; Adjutant Crawford's Orderly Book, Burton Historical Collections, Detroit Public Library; Frazer E. Wilson, ed., "St. Clair's Defeat as told by an Eyewitness -- From Original MSS," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publication, X, 1902, pp.378-380; "Winthrop Sargent's Diary While with General Arthur St. Clair's Expedition against the Indians," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, XXXIII (July, 1924), pp.232-273; John M'Clung, Sketches of Western Adventure (Philadelphia: 1832), reprinted by Arno Press and the New York Times in the series, Mass Violence in America, 1969, pp.282-298.

⁵³"Winthrop Sargent's Diary While with General Arthur St. Clair's Expedition against the Indians," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, XXXIII (July, 1924), pp.232-273.

of triumph."⁵⁴

⁵⁴Buell, The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam, p.116; Knox to Lt. of County of Washington, February 25, 1792, Baird Papers, Frontier War MSS, Draper Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Baird to Mifflin, June 28, 1792, Ibid.; "Executive Journal of the Northwest Territory, July 9, 1788 -- January 15, 1803" -- see for example Orders to the Militia, December 10, 1791, pp.133-134, Sargent MSS; Sargent to Lt. Col. Commandant Sproat, Washington County, January 2, 1792, pp.138-139, Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

DOMESTIC RESPONSE

News of the disaster which befell General St. Clair's army was slow to arrive in the nation's capital. Rumors of the outcome of the battle began to filter into Philadelphia in early December, but it was not until the evening of Friday, December 9, 1791, that the full extent of the calamity became known to the President.¹ Though shocked and disappointed, the President immediately set about to inform Congress. This was done on Monday, December 12, when Congress next met. "It is with great concern that I communicate to you the information received from Major General St. Clair, of the misfortune which has befallen the troops under his command," stated the President. Promising a report in the near future as to the measures which should be pursued in light of the defeat, the President included for consideration by Congress, the limited infor-

¹The first indication of the defeat to arrive in the East apparently was conveyed in a letter from a gentleman who had recently returned from Kentucky. See John Rogers to Governor Henry Lee, November 26, 1791, Frontier War MSS, Draper Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society. The slowness with which the news spread

mation relative to the defeat he had in his possession.²

The atmosphere in which the President began to draft policies for the future was an emotional one. No sooner had the shocked and tattered remnants of St. Clair's army found safety behind the sturdy walls of Fort Jefferson than word of its fate began to spread along the frontier. From Kentucky to Pittsburgh the people were in a state of panic feeling themselves defenseless in the face of an enraged and implacable enemy. Exposed as they were "to the cruel ravages of a powerful and savage foe," they pleaded for immediate aid from the national government in the form of men, money and munitions, lest the entire West be abandoned. Letters and petitions from frontier residents flowed into Philadelphia begging for relief. Nor, was their fear without foundation. Following the far less serious setbacks of Harmar's expedition the previous year, the Indians had attacked with a frightening

is indicated by the fact that the frontier settlement of Marietta, Ohio, did not receive word until December 4, 1791. See "Extracts from the Diary. . .," Samuel P. Hildreth Collection, Marietta College Library. For additional information see General Knox to General St. Clair, December 23, 1791, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.275-276; Freeman, George Washington, VI, p.336, note 79.

²Washington to the Senate and House of Representatives, December 12, 1791, Writings of Washington, XXXI, p.442; Annals of Congress, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Cols. 1052-1059. (Hereinafter referred to as Annals). The information which Washington forwarded to Congress at this time were letters from St. Clair to Knox dated October 6, November 1 and November 9, 1791. These letters may be found in the Annals and also in St. Clair Papers, State Library of Ohio.

intensity. Now, following the St. Clair debacle, attacks of unprecedented ferocity were expected. The very existence of the frontier settlements was felt to be in jeopardy.³

In addition to these alarming pleas from the West, the Administration also was feeling the pressures rapidly and violently building in the press. The defeat of St. Clair and the subsequent helplessness of the frontier brought forth a storm of protest and denunciation of the nation's Indian policies which would dominate the news for months to come.⁴ The Administration found itself in a position not only of having to defend the frontiers against Indian attack, but to defend itself as well against a rising

³The plight of the frontiersmen will be studied more closely in a later chapter. For some indication of the conditions on the frontier following St. Clair's defeat see "Executive Journal of the Northwest Territory, 1788-1803," Sargent Papers, Ohio State Historical Society; Wilkinson to ?, December 12, 1791, Frontier War MSS, Draper Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Ebenezer Denny to Harmer, June 1, 1792, Harmer Papers, Clements Library; Knox to Lt. of Washington County, February 25, 1792, Baird Papers, Draper Collections, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Putnam to ?, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library; "Dr. Drakes Memoir of the Miami Country," Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, XVIII, pp.86-87; Governor of Pennsylvania to the President, December 22, 1791, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.215.

⁴See chapters 4 and 5 for a detailed discussion of the nature of the newspaper debate which was provoked by the defeat of General St. Clair. For additional information see also, Knox to Wilkinson, February 11, 1792, I, Wilkinson Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Wayne to Wilkinson, August 5, 1792, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library.

tide of opposition against the Indian War and the policies which led to it.

These circumstances did not deter the President from immediately adopting a firm policy for the future. The West was essential to national survival and its conquest must be achieved in spite of the cost. While consistently expressing his sincere grief over the loss of the brave men who died in combat, he just as consistently stated his belief that their death was the only irreparable loss. All other losses could readily be recovered and the policy which led to the necessity of sending the previous expeditions would be continued.⁵

While western settlements were doing all in their power to prepare themselves against the expected Indian onslaught, Secretary of War Knox, at the instruction of the President, prepared a lengthy statement on the condition of the frontiers, for presentation to Congress.⁶ Knox's first draft of a report, prepared by the end of December, was rejected by Washington since it did not go far enough

⁵Washington to the Senate and House of Representatives, December 12, 1791, Writings of Washington, XXXI, p.442; Washington to John Armstrong, March 11, 1792, Ibid., XXXII, pp.1-2; Washington to William Moultrie, March 14, 1792, Ibid., pp.4-5; Washington to Governor Charles Pinckney, March 17, 1792, Ibid., pp.5-7.

⁶A printed version of the report is contained in Knox Papers, XXX, January 16, 1792, Massachusetts Historical Society.

to please the westerners who must be "endulged", but his second, presented in mid-January was accepted and delivered to Congress on January 16, 1792.⁷

The first portion of the report consisted of a rather detailed history of American-Indian relations in the Northwest since the Revolutionary War. In this history, Knox placed the greatest emphasis upon the constant efforts of the United States to obtain its goals peacefully. The United States, he argued, wanted nothing but a just and honorable peace. The Indians, however, insisted on war. In such a situation, Knox concluded, the United States had no option but to persevere in prosecuting a war which was both necessary and just. Peace was possible only if the Indians came to an honest realization that their own interests rested in a peaceful accommodation with the United States.⁸

⁷ Washington to Knox, December 26, 1791, Writings of Washington, XXXI, pp.450-451; "Report of Knox to the President," December 26, 1791, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.197-199; "Statement Relative to the Frontiers Northwest of Ohio," December 26, 1791, Ibid., pp.197-199; John Steele to Colonel Joseph Winston, January 22, 1792, in H.M. Wagstaff, ed., The Papers of John Steele, I (Publications of the North Carolina Historical Commission, 1924), pp.82-83. For specific information regarding the measures taken on the frontier for defense against the Indians see "Executive Journal of the Northwest Territory," Sargent Papers, Ohio State Historical Society.

⁸ Report to Congress, January 16, 1792, Knox Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Having elaborately detailed his defense of Administration policies, Knox proceeded to the second part of his report. This consisted of a request for a new, enlarged, better trained and better equipped army. This force was to be raised immediately so that it could march against the recalcitrant tribes of the Northwest as soon as possible. In addition, in order to offer immediate relief to the frontier citizens, permission was asked to call out frontier scouts and mounted militia.⁹

These plans to create a new army were presented as a bill and introduced into Congress where immediate and intense debate developed. Arguments centered around that section of the proposed law which called for the creation of three new regular army regiments and a squadron of light dragoons, which would amount to a total of 3,040 men not including officers.¹⁰ However, the nature of the debate showed that feelings about the Indian War went far deeper than a simple question of the size of the new army.¹¹

Immediately, the very nature of the war was opened

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Cols. 337-348.

¹¹ Unfortunately the record is unclear as to who the individual speakers were during this debate. The nature of the argumentation, however, is abundantly clear and is sufficient to show the conflict engendered in Congress over the Indian wars.

to question. The war was said to be "as unjustly undertaken as it has since been unwisely and unsuccessfully conducted."¹² This was so because the frontier settler was the instigator, not the victim of frontier hostilities. It was he, not the Indian, who provoked war by encroaching upon Indian lands. If the frontier citizen could be restrained from taking lands from the Indians, then the Indians would be willing to negotiate a just and honest peace. Until that be done the war was totally unjust on the part of the United States.¹³

Further, it was argued, the nation is going after the wrong enemy. The Indians were able to resist the United States so forcibly only because of the aid which they received from the British. It was a national insult to allow the British to occupy American territory. Such a situation served only to expose the nation's weakness. The government cannot continue "to send forth armies to be butchered in the forests, while we suffer the British to keep possession of the posts within our territory."¹⁴ Only when we have the strength to remove the British will the end be found to the Indian problem.

¹²Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Col. 337.

¹³Ibid., Cols. 337-338.

¹⁴Ibid., Col. 338.

Would it not be far wiser, it was argued, to maintain a defense perimeter around the already settled portions of the frontier. Proper use of the militia, a far stronger and more effective a force than the regulars, combined with the policy of defense, would not only be more effective but more economical as well.¹⁵

But if the nation decides upon yet another expedition, why would such an enlarged army be necessary? The reasons for St. Clair's defeat which "erected a monument to our eternal disgrace and infamy," was not owing to its size.¹⁶ Rather, the battle was lost as a result of the slowness with which the troops assembled, and the lateness of the season in which they marched. Surely then, a force of smaller size than that now proposed would be less expensive yet sufficient to accomplish the desired goal.¹⁷

The expense of the proposed army, estimated to be approximately \$1,250,000, was a source of dismay to opponents of the measure such as John Steele of North Carolina and Samuel Livermore of New Hampshire. Why should millions be squandered, it was argued, "and no one, except

¹⁵ Ibid., Cols. 339-341.

¹⁶ Ibid., Col. 340.

¹⁷ Ibid.

those who are in the secrets of the Cabinet, knows for what reason the war had been thus carried on for three years."¹⁸ Surely this could only lead to increase taxes which could but ruin our finances. So vehement did this argument against the augmentation of the army become that one congressman was moved to inquire if they had decided to use this occasion as "a day set apart for rhetorical flourishes, as the galleries were open, and he saw the short-hand writers stationed at their different posts?"¹⁹

But, the measure had its supporters as well, such as Andrew Moore and Alexander White both of Virginia. The war they argued was by no means unjustified. Both "self-preservation and indispensable necessity" caused the nation to take up arms. The war was one of defense against the many atrocities of the Indians. That, plus the tribes' refusal to negotiate an honorable settlement to the war, proved that "If the present war be not in every respect justifiable, then there never was, nor ever will be, a just war."²⁰

As for attempting to negotiate peace at this time, White and Moore argued that tempers on both sides were so

¹⁸ Ibid., Col. 342.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., Col. 343.

high that any attempt at negotiation would be futile. The war was a fact of life that must be faced -- it was simply too late to debate the merits of the justice of the struggle. The only way the war could be ended would be to withdraw all troops from the frontier and leave the frontier citizenry at the mercies of the savages.²¹

Naturally the war was expensive, but what is money in comparison with the lives of our citizens? While the expense of continuing the war was great it would be far less expensive to strike a decisive blow at that time than to allow the war to drag on year after year draining the treasury of its money. An immediate force of the size proposed, if raised immediately and marched successfully against the Indians, would not only be less expensive than any alternative plan but would actually profit the nation by securing to it control of the Indian trade.²²

Nor would it be sufficient to rely on a smaller force or one composed of militia. The size of St. Clair's army had obviously proved to be inadequate and the militia had long proven themselves lacking in the discipline required to successfully march against the Indians. Quite simply then, the bill either would be passed as proposed

²¹Ibid., Col. 345.

²²Ibid., Cols. 345-347.

or the death of our fellow countrymen would be the price.²³

Congress adjourned for the day with the temper of the House evidently well in favor of the measure in spite of the heated objections of the minority. When the Congress reconvened the next morning, Friday, January 27, a last attack was made on the measure by one of its principal opponents, John Mercer of Maryland. Mercer's attack on the bill was forceful. He maintained that the bill was not really a responsible measure to secure the safety of the frontiers but rather constituted a part of a larger plan to increase the authority of the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Mercer's arguments constitute an attempt to turn the results of St. Clair's defeat into a partisan issue. Although party politics were still in their infancy, Hamilton had been recognized as the leader of the Federalist faction in government.

According to Mercer's interpretation of the measure, an unusual amount of pressure had been exerted upon the House to speedily pass the bill, ". . .and thus, with the tomahawk suspended over our heads, we must give up to Administration the dearest interests of the people, and sacrifice the most sacred rights of the Constitution." The whole plan was to force a hurried passage of the bill in order to institute taxes, duties and sinking funds to

²³Ibid., Cols. 343-348.

the detriment of the small farmer and to the benefit of the speculator. Were this allowed to happen it would become clear that, "The really efficient Legislature of the country," would be the Treasury. A Treasury which allegedly was trying to tie together its own selfish goals with that of the Indian War it was using as an excuse. This attack on Hamilton, the first of several that year, would appear again in a different vein during the debate over the appropriations bill in March and April, 1792.²⁴

When Mercer had completed his statements, the House adjourned for the weekend. Upon reconvening the following Monday the section under debate was put to a vote and the opponents of the measure lost convincingly by a vote of 34-18. No further significant debate attended the bill and it easily passed the House on February 1, 1792. Minor amendments by the Senate necessitated the creation of a conference committee; however, after a minimum of delay, the measure was approved by both Houses on March 4, 1792.²⁵

Not even the President had been spared from attack during the debate over the bill. One member of Congress

²⁴ Ibid., Cols. 348-354.

²⁵ "An Act for making further and more effectual provision for the protection of the Frontiers of the United States," March 5, 1792, Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Cols. 1343-1346; Ibid., Cols. 355, 428-435.

accused him of deliberately planning for a war while shunning honest attempts to negotiate a peace. Washington was forced to answer this critic at length in an attempt to prove that peace was always his primary aim and that war was a last resort. This attack on the President, however, was isolated and certainly his enormous prestige did much to secure the passage of the bill.²⁶

Meanwhile, the controversy swirling about the head of Arthur St. Clair had intensified. The defeated general had arrived in Philadelphia at the end of December and found the capital swept with rumors of his incompetence, drunkenness and cowardice as having been the cause of the nation's humiliation. Daily the newspapers kept these ugly rumors alive, making St. Clair understandably anxious to find the means to clear his name of the obloquy being heaped upon it.²⁷

²⁶ Senator Benjamin Hawkins to the President, February 10, 1792, Territorial Papers, II, pp.366-369; "Errors of Government Towards the Indians," February, 1792, Writings of Washington, XXXI, pp.491-494; Ward, Department of War, p.138.

²⁷ As early as November 25, 1791, St. Clair had begun to hear insinuations made against his conduct. See fragmentary "St. Clair Diary," November 9-27, 1791, St. Clair Papers, Ohio State Library. By the beginning of 1792, he found it necessary to write to several newspapers to complain of published attacks on his conduct during the campaign. See for example: St. Clair to Editor, January 25, 1792, St. Clair Papers, Ohio State Library; St. Clair to Dunlop, February, 1792, Ibid. One survivor of the battle claimed that it was commonly believed that St. Clair had drunk all night before the battle. See Ensign Charles

St. Clair had early decided to resign his commission and formally presented his resignation to President Washington on March 26, 1792. His letter to Washington, however, contained an additional request that he be allowed to maintain his commission until a court of inquiry could be formed in order to investigate the reasons behind his army's defeat. In this manner he hoped his name would be cleared of any wrongdoing.²⁸

Washington certainly was not surprised by St. Clair's request to be relieved of his commission. Indeed, as early as January 22, 1792, the President had on his desk a list of potential candidates to replace him.²⁹ While accepting the resignation with regret, he found it impossible to grant St. Clair's second request. A court of inquiry would be impossible since there were an insufficient number of general officers of required rank.³⁰

Wells Account on St. Clair's Defeat, Frontier War MSS, Draper Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society..

²⁸ St. Clair to the President, March 26, 1792, St. Clair Papers, Ohio State Library. St. Clair had in fact submitted a draft of his resignation letter to the President a month earlier. See General St. Clair to the President, February 24, 1792, Ibid.

²⁹ Washington to Knox, January 22, 1792, Writings of Washington, XXXI, p.463. The actual list of officers and comments on each is in Ibid., pp.509-515.

³⁰ President Washington to General St. Clair, March 28, 1792, Ibid., XXXII, pp.12-13.

The day following St. Clair's request, however, Congress would take an unprecedented step which would allow St. Clair a public hearing. As early as February 2, 1792, the motion had been made that Congress form a committee to investigate the reasons behind the defeat.³¹ Nothing came of the motion at that time, but by March, Congress, acting on pressures both from the press and its own members, would vote to create a committee which was to investigate the defeat and report its findings to the whole House.³²

St. Clair's defense, therefore, would take place before a Congressional committee. He did request of Washington that he be allowed to retain his commission until the investigation ended, however, once again he was to be disappointed. The President informed him that he had no choice but to accept his resignation immediately as the army needed a leader in the field and therefore no such delay could be tolerated. As for St. Clair's good name which was being damaged by the malice "which is daily pouring from the press into the public ear," the President sincerely hoped that the House inquiry would afford an opportunity of "explaining your conduct, in a manner satis-

³¹Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Col. 356.

³²Ibid., Col. 493.

factory to the public and yourself."³³ In this manner, St. Clair formally resigned his commission and Washington subsequently appointed Anthony Wayne as the new commander of the American army on April 12, 1792.³⁴

The resolution calling for an investigation of the defeat of the United States Army was introduced into the House by William Branch Giles of Virginia on March 27, 1792.³⁵ Certain members of Congress, obviously not content with the Administration's explanations, and undoubtedly influenced by the growing anti-war sentiment in the nation as reflected by the press, sought to examine the causes of the defeat and if necessary seek impeachment of those who had been derelict in their duty.

The motion originally introduced by Giles began as follows:

Resolved, That the President of the United States be

³³General St. Clair to the President, March 31, 1792, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.284-285; President Washington to St. Clair, Writings of Washington, XXXII, pp.15-16. St. Clair was apparently satisfied that the House inquiry would be a suitable replacement for the court of inquiry he originally requested. See St. Clair to Sargent, April 4, 1792, Sargent Papers, Ohio State Historical Society.

³⁴Knox to Wayne, April 12, 1792, in Richard C. Knopf, ed., Anthony Wayne: A Name in Arms, The Wayne-Knox-Pickering-McHenry Correspondence, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1960), pp.15-16; General St. Clair to the President, April 7, 1792, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.285-286.

³⁵Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Col.490.

requested to institute an inquiry into the causes of the late defeat of the army under the command of Major General Arthur St. Clair. . . ."

Not Congress, then, but the President was to conduct an investigation, and subsequently report back to the House. A considerable debate raged around this motion, a debate centered not on the need for an investigation, but, rather, over the propriety of requesting the President to undertake it.³⁶

The reasons behind Giles' requesting such an action by the President is not entirely clear. But it is certain that its opponents understood it to be an attack upon the Administration. John Vining of Delaware immediately objected to the motion since he felt that it "would only embarrass the President." He himself desired a full and complete investigation of the defeat, and the impeachment of any who were to blame for it. However, he felt the Giles motion was impractical and unconstitutional. Vining believed that the proper course to follow was to ask the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of War to make reports to the House regarding their roles in the expedition.

Similarly opposed to the motion was William Smith of South Carolina. According to Smith, since this was the first time the Congress had ever attempted to examine the

³⁶Ibid., Cols. 490-493.

conduct of officials who were directly under the control of the executive, it appeared to him that "the resolution proposed could not but be considered as an impeachment of the conduct of the First Magistrate." Why, he asked, should the President be called upon to render an account of his actions in carrying into effect the laws of the nation before there was any proof that he had been derelict in his duty. Smith himself would be in favor of an inquiry if the President could be shown to have ignored his obligation, "but, till that was done, he trusted the measure would not be adopted. . . ."

Giles defended his motion stating that "the inquiry was indispensable and the mode proposed strictly proper." New Jersey's Elias Boudinot believed that the public had a right to know the truth and that the motion was but a simple request of the President. Abraham Clark, also of New Jersey, seconded his colleague adding that the public mind was so "agitated" by the defeat and its causes that this inquiry by the President must be held.

It was then moved that since expenditures of public monies were involved the proper procedure would be to have the House investigate the defeat through the appointment of a select committee. Minor objections were made to this motion by Giles and his followers, but it did embody their obvious desire, that an investigation of some sort be made.

John Steele of North Carolina expressed the feelings of many when he stated that the report given to Congress by Knox was unsatisfactory to him and left many questions unanswered. He stated that "He had no great doubt that an inquiry would lead to an impeachment." "Justice to the public," he stated, "and the officers particularly concerned, loudly demands an inquiry." After all, Abraham Baldwin of Georgia stated, the committee of the House could be formed and then if they determined that "failure had taken place on the part of the Executive officers, he should then be prepared to address the President, and to request him to take the proper steps in the case."

Giles' motion was consequently voted down 21-35, and the substitute motion was introduced calling:

That a committee be appointed to inquire into the causes of the failure of the late expedition under Major General St. Clair; and that the said committee be empowered to call for such persons, papers and records, as may be necessary to assist their inquiries.

The motion met with little opposition and was passed by a vote of 44-10.³⁷ Thus was created the first Congressional Investigating Committee in American history.

As the House was organizing the formation of a Congressional investigation, they were at the same time debating a bill to raise additional funds for the support

³⁷Ibid.

of the new army. Partisanship soon developed, not over whether such funds should or should not be raised, but rather over the procedure to be followed in obtaining necessary information from the Secretary of the Treasury.

The resolution before the House was:

That the Secretary of the Treasury be directed to report to this House his opinion of the best mode - for raising the additional supplies requisite for the ensuing year.

The argument put forth by the opponents of the Secretary of the Treasury, such as Abraham Baldwin of Georgia and William Findley of Pennsylvania, was that he should not be allowed to make such a report or else the House would soon become but a rubber stamp for the already powerful Hamilton. Madison and others were determined to prevent the Secretary from being able to dictate to the House ways and means of raising funds. The objection was that the resolution asked the Secretary not for information, but for an actual plan to raise the needed monies. According to some, this would in effect turn the government into a ministerial form such as England possessed, or worse, would give so much power to the Executive Department as to render the House a nullity. As one member of the House pointed out, the arguments used against the resolution would be more fitting if the measure was calling for the abolition of the Treasury Department itself. When brought to a vote the resolution did pass, but by a very close vote of 31-

27.³⁸ Weeks later, Hamilton, writing of the incident, remembered it with bitterness, stating that Madison "well knew, that, if he had prevailed, a certain consequence was my resignation," but, Madison and his followers were disappointed in achieving their goal.³⁹

Meanwhile, the members of Congress who were to conduct the inquiry into the reasons for St. Clair's defeat had been appointed. Thomas Fitzsimons of Pennsylvania would be the chairman of the committee which consisted of Giles of Virginia, Mercer of Maryland, John Vining of Delaware, Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts, John Steele of North Carolina and Abraham Clark of New Jersey.⁴⁰

The committee wasted no time in beginning its investigation. Immediately they called upon the Secretary of War for "such persons, papers and records, as may be necessary to assist their inquiries." Knox, realizing the unprecedented nature of the request, and doubting his

³⁸ Ibid., Col. 452.

³⁹ Alexander Hamilton to Edward Carrington, May 26, 1792, in Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., The Papers of Alexander Hamilton (Columbia University Press: New York, 1966), XI, pp. 426-445. (Hamilton's "Report Relative to the Additional Supplies for the Ensuing Year," is found in Ibid., pp. 139-149. The report was debated in Congress during April, 1792. The bill resulting from the deliberations of Congress was passed May 2, 1792, and is found in Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Cols. 1364-1370.)

⁴⁰ Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Col. 494.

authority to deliver this information, wrote the President requesting his guidance on the matter.⁴¹

Washington realized that the response to the request would set a precedent for the future and consequently sought the advice of his department heads. This meeting took place on March 31, 1792, with Hamilton, Knox, Jefferson and Randolph in attendance. Washington himself "neither acknowledged nor denied, nor even doubted the propriety of what the house was doing. . . ," but rather solicited the opinion of his cabinet since a precedent was involved and he desired "it should be rightly conducted." The cabinet was unable to form a decision that day but at a second meeting of the full cabinet on April 2, all present found themselves "of one mind." First, the House did have the authority to make inquiries. Second, they had the right to call for papers. Third, the President ought to comply with the requests of Congress although he had the right to refuse to communicate any papers that would tend to injure the

⁴¹George C. Chalou, "St. Clair's Defeat, 1792," in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Roger Bruns, eds., Congress Investigates: A Documented History, 1792-1974 (Chelsea House Publishers: New York, 1975), I, p.3. This work also conveniently reprints the following: "House Debate over Resolution Establishing Investigating Committee, March 27, 1792": "Report of Arthur St. Clair to Committee, May, 1792": "Committee Report, May 8, 1792": "House Debate over Committee Report, November 13 and 14, 1792": "Memorial of Samuel Hodgdon, November, 1792": "Extracts from the Minutes of the Committee, December 1792 - January, 1793": "Observations by Arthur St. Clair, February, 1793": "Committee Report, February 15, 1793."

public good. Finally, the House did not have the right to request papers of department heads but rather should send all such requests directly to the President.⁴²

Although there is no evidence that the Congress was informed of the Cabinet's opinion regarding the right of the executive to withhold papers from a congressional committee, the House accepted the remaining conditions without hesitation. On April 4, 1792, the House passed a resolution requesting the President to supply all papers of a public nature.⁴³ Congressmen Fitzsimons, Giles and Steele were next appointed by the House to deliver this resolution to the President. And, on April 19, 1792, the requested information was turned over to the committee.⁴⁴ All relevant papers were turned over in this instance since none were deemed prejudicial to the public good. Nevertheless, the foundation had been laid for future presidential claims to the right of "executive privilege."

The committee, meeting in a crowded hearing room, then began the tedious process of examining documents and

⁴²Paul I. Ford, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), II, pp.213-214.

⁴³Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Cols. 535-536.

⁴⁴Ibid. For Washington's permission to turn over all relevant documents see Washington to Knox, April 4, 1792, Writings of Washington, XXXII, p.15.

interviewing more than twenty-five witnesses which included the Secretaries of War and the Treasury, army officers, and St. Clair himself.⁴⁵ For over a month these witnesses paraded before the committee, reviewing in detail the events leading to November 4, 1791.

St. Clair came under fire from a number of the witnesses and he found it necessary to testify at length in his own defense. Realizing that the season had passed for proper weather why had he marched? The orders from Knox were clear and explicit St. Clair stated, and left no room for interpretation. The expedition was to proceed regardless of the time of year. As late as September 1, 1791, St. Clair was informed that the President wished him "to stimulate your exertions in the highest degree, and to move as rapidly as the lateness of the season, and the nature of the case will admit."⁴⁶ How could he have detached the valuable first regiment so deep in Indian territory? This was essential according to the former general since the supplies they were sent to protect were necessary to

⁴⁵ Although George C. Chalou in his introductory essay to documents relating to the St. Clair investigation states that "no records of the committee proceedings are extant," substantial though incomplete minutes of the committee hearings are to be found in St. Clair Papers, Ohio State Library.

⁴⁶ Knox to St. Clair, September 1, 1791, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, p.29⁴ⁿ.

the success of the mission. If there was fault to be found, it was with the contractors who caused the delay in their delivery, not with him.⁴⁷

One officer under his command, Lieutenant Darke, testified against his commander that there was "a want of harmony between the superior officers and their general." St. Clair denied this charge vehemently, and attributed it to "a deep cabal" formed against him of which he was not aware at the time. The strict discipline he exercised on the march was essential to the goals of his mission. Perhaps the complaining officers simply missed the "balls and regattas" they had experienced elsewhere.⁴⁸

St. Clair's defense was a capable one. He was not to be blamed for deficiencies of the contractors or quartermaster corps which led to inadequate transportation, low quality supplies and delinquencies in pay for the soldiers. As to the battle itself, St. Clair argued strongly that his conduct had been perfectly proper. He had at all times

⁴⁷See "Notes on Committee Hearing," St. Clair Papers, Ohio State Library; "Report of Arthur St. Clair to Committee, May, 1792," Arthur St. Clair, A Narrative of the Campaign Against the Indians, Under the Command of Major General St. Clair (Philadelphia: 1812), pp.26-58. (The commander of the First Regiment was Major John F. Hamtramck. He was found innocent of charges brought against him in a court martial shortly after the battle; see "Proceedings of a General Court Martial. . . .," November 26, 1791, St. Clair Papers, Ohio State Library.)

⁴⁸Ibid.

been in full command of the situation and had never lost control of the battle in spite of its suddenness and intensity. It was he, after all, who had led the charge through the Indian lines which had made possible a successful retreat of his remaining forces.

In conclusion, St. Clair argued, the circumstances surrounding both the preparation and the battle itself were extremely difficult ones. And, under these circumstances:

I trust, the committee will think, I did the best to overcome them: that, in every respect I fulfilled my duty, . . . and that, from whatever causes the campaign proved unsuccessful, the misfortunes cannot be laid to my charge.⁴⁹

In spite of St. Clair's opinion that the committee was "a sad one" and extremely prejudiced against him, its report of May 8, 1792, completely exonerated him of any wrongdoing.⁵⁰ In the opinion of the Committee, "the failure of the late expedition can, in no respect, be imputed to his conduct, either at any time before or during the action."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Governor St. Clair to Acting Governor Sargent, June 7, 1792, Territorial Papers, II, pp.397-398.

⁵¹ The Committee's Report, May 8, 1792, is found in several places including American State Papers, Military Affairs, pp.36-39; Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.286-299; Annals, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Cols. 1106-1113.

The balance of the Committee's report contained a total condemnation of the Quartermaster General, Samuel Hodgdon, and of the contractor, William Duer, assigned to supply the army. The defeat was principally attributed to their gross mismanagement. The inadequacies of the supply system were so complete as to stagger the imagination.

Rations went undelivered, guns were rusted and broken, horses mistreated, gunpowder was inferior, tents, knapsacks, packsaddles, all were "deficient in quantity and bad in quality." Hodgdon himself, in spite of repeated orders to present himself, did not bother to arrive in camp until September 10, 1791. This created a situation in which the commanding general was forced to act as his own quartermaster.

By attacking Hodgdon's handling of his duties as Quartermaster General, the committee was also indirectly criticizing his superior, Secretary of War Knox. Further, Knox came under attack for not using all the funds at his command to secure the proper supply of the army, for not forwarding the army's pay until December of 1791, and for giving orders to the recruiting officers which were not "sufficiently explicit." This last point led to a situation in which some recruits had their enlistments expire well before the November 4, 1791, battle.

The Committee's report also questioned the conduct

of the Treasury Department. Theodosius Fowler, the original contractor for supplies of the army, had transferred his contract to William Duer, and the Treasury Department was so informed. Subsequently, a bond was entered into by Duer for the execution of the contract. Yet, he was allowed to do so by the Treasury Department "without any security whatsoever."⁵²

By the time the committee presented its report, it was too late to be considered in that session of Congress. Therefore, it was "Resolved, That this House will, early in the next session, proceed to take the same into consideration."⁵³

No specific charges against the Secretary of War were made in the report, but the implications against him were strong and he resolved to fight the committee's conclusions.⁵⁴ Much speculation regarding the report took place during the summer of 1792 and by November when the report was at long last brought up for consideration before the House of Representatives, the defeat of Arthur

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Knox to Hodgdon, May 12, 1792, Knox Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; St. Clair, "Observations on the Statements made to the Committee by the Secretary of War and the Quartermaster General"; St. Clair, A Narrative. . . , pp.83-154.

St. Clair once more was an open issue.

Knox's desire was that he would be allowed to appear before the House personally and present his arguments in his own defense. A motion requesting that both he and Hamilton be allowed to do so was made on November 13, 1792. Proponents of the measure would argue that since reputations were damaged by the original report, and since their inquiry "appears to be the beginning of an arrangement preparatory to an impeachment," the proposed resolution would provide the most equitable and fastest route towards discovering the truth behind the St. Clair defeat.⁵⁵

The opponents of this measure would prevail, however, and the motion would be defeated. Opposition was led by James Madison and included members of the original committee, Clark, Giles, and the chairman Thomas Fitzsimons. Madison opposed the measure on constitutional grounds. The idea of allowing heads of departments to testify before the House "would form an innovation in the mode of conducting the business of this House, and introduce a precedent which would lead to perplexing and embarrassing consequences." Clark, Giles and Fitzsimons all felt that the secretaries' appearance was unnecessary. Their inquiry had been thorough and in fact, "no person had applied to the House for redress of any supposed injury received by

⁵⁵Annals, 2nd Cong., 2nd Sess., Cols. 679-689.

the report." Surely, Madison argued, the "only practicable mode of transacting public business," would be to have any additional information called for in writing.⁵⁶

Secretary Knox was particularly disappointed by this setback. He had waited "with anxious expectation" for the House to allow him to attend the hearings on the report. Their failure to allow him to do so simply "added to my solicitude and regret." Again, he appealed to the House for some form by which he could effectively argue his case since the report had been "in a sense very injurious to my reputation."⁵⁷

Nor was Knox alone in the desire to be heard in defense of his good name. Samuel Hodgdon had suffered far more at the hands of the committee and he submitted to the House a lengthy memorial arguing his innocence of any wrongdoing or dereliction of duty while Quartermaster General of the army.⁵⁸

Those desiring an open hearing before the whole House argued that not only would this save the Congress time since it would be much faster than another long and

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Knox to House of Representatives, November 14, 1792, Annals, 2nd Cong., 2nd Sess., Col. 685.

⁵⁸ "Memorial of Samuel Hodgdon," November, 1792, reprinted in Congress Investigates, I, pp. 54-63.

drawn out committee hearing, but that since the House had to consider the matter sooner or later it would be better to do so immediately. Furthermore, since the original report had indeed injured reputations and had been published in the newspapers, the accused had the right to a public hearing and should not be shut off in a small committee room.

On the contrary argued Madison, if he wanted to prevent a thorough investigation he would be entirely in favor of the report being considered by the whole House. If a small committee of Congress took seven weeks to prepare its report, the whole House "could never get through the matter." As to a public hearing, protested Giles, the original committee held public meetings yet Hamilton and Knox appeared only once and then seemed quite anxious to leave. If they had more to say why did they not speak up at that time? Finally, it was argued, since the report is now said to be incomplete, how can the House possibly consider it? Let the report be sent back to committee, "and then the House will be in a situation to judge."⁵⁹

The vote on the issue was close. It was agreed 30-22 that the report, together with the documents relating thereto, be sent back to committee. The membership of the second committee, however, would be somewhat altered.

⁵⁹Annals, 2nd Cong., 2nd Sess., Cols. 679-689.

Fitzsimons, Giles, Steele and Clark would remain from the original committee along with the addition of William Findley of Pennsylvania. Vining, Mercer and Sedgwick would not be retained.⁶⁰

St. Clair's fear that the second committee's hearings would be an attempt to shift the blame unto himself was soon borne out by events. The attempt came in the form of a thirty-five page statement by Hodgdon and an hundred-thirty-five page report by Knox which constituted the principle new evidence to be considered by the committee.⁶¹

Hodgdon's memorial was a weak attempt to exonerate himself from the charge of incompetence. St. Clair himself, stated Hodgdon, had approved of the list of purchases made by him and in fact had declared that the list "would do very well." Further, Hodgdon stated, the quality of supplies he forwarded to the army was excellent. And, as to his arriving late in camp, this, according to Hodgdon, was with the approval of General Butler who was second in command. The delay was not occasioned by a lack of diligence on his part as the report claimed, but rather was owing to the necessity of securing the supplies necessary

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Knox's report cannot be located. For Hodgdon's Memorial see note 58.

to maintain the army. It was not the "mal-administration" of his department that caused the defeat. Rather, in an apparent attempt to deflect criticism from himself and toward St. Clair, Hodgdon concluded that the army's failure "lie in a very different direction."⁶²

It was Knox's lengthy statement, however, that was more devastating to St. Clair's position. According to Knox, the failure of St. Clair's army could not, "with justice or propriety, be charged upon any essential omission in the preparatory part of the campaign by the secretary of war." Echoing Hodgdon's arguments Knox claimed that the army did not fail due to any deficiency in the supply system. Nor was the Secretary guilty of delaying the movements of troops westward prior to the start of the expedition. Furthermore, the Secretary denied that the army's pay was delayed because of his actions. Rather, he claimed sufficient funds were forwarded but simply were not put to the proper use by St. Clair.

As to the actual culpability of St. Clair in the defeat, Knox claimed that St. Clair did indeed have the authority to postpone the march if he had been so convinced that the lateness of the season seriously jeopardized the possibilities of success. Further, according to Knox,

⁶²"Memorial of Samuel Hodgdon," Congress Investigates, I, pp.54-63.

St. Clair should never have allowed himself to have been surprised by the enemy. Perhaps, he suggested, St. Clair's ill health during the march contributed to the defeat. Had he been well and alert, it might "have altered the situation of things." Particularly galling to St. Clair was Knox's reversal of position on the numbers of Indians which St. Clair faced in battle. Originally he had stated that the Indians opposing St. Clair numbered at least 2500. In this statement, however, Knox stated that he then believed that the number was no more than one thousand. St. Clair therefore should not claim superior numbers as a cause of his defeat.⁶³

This attack by Knox on the original report in general and on St. Clair in particular was not unexpected by the defeated general. As early as May, 1792, St. Clair was aware that Knox had no intention of allowing the original report to stand as written, and suspected the blame would be shifted to himself. What was unexpected by St. Clair was the length of time it took Knox to present his report to the committee. As early as November 14, 1792, Knox had expressed his desire to present his viewpoint. But, he apparently waited many weeks before presenting his

⁶³The nature of Knox's argumentation may be ascertained by studying St. Clair's response to it. See St. Clair, "Observations. . . ,"
A Narrative. . ., pp.83-154; Knox to St. Clair, December 23, 1791, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.275-276.

lengthy defense. St. Clair, writing in February, 1793, complained because of this delay he had been given only three days to prepare his written defense.⁶⁴

St. Clair suspected that Knox's strategy was to wait until it was too late in the session for Congress to have the time to consider the revised committee report. Both Knox's statement and Hodgdon's memorial, according to St. Clair "seemed intended for the press" rather than honest discussion.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, in spite of the brief amount of time he was allowed, St. Clair was able to present a lengthy communication in his own defense. Point by point he denounced the attacks made on him by Knox and Hodgdon. If the poor quality of supplies did not cause the failure of the campaign it was owing to the diligent manner in which he had his men repair them. Never was he given any discretionary power to postpone the campaign. His orders on this count were clear and explicit. Nor were his troops or his duty ever neglected in spite of his ill health -- "the march of the army was never retarded one hour on account

⁶⁴ St. Clair to the President, February 2, 1793, Territorial Papers, II, p.430; St. Clair, A Narrative. . ., pp.v-xix, 83-154; St. Clair to ?, January 23, 1792 [1793], St. Clair Papers, Ohio State Library.

⁶⁵ St. Clair, "Observations. . . , " A Narrative. . ., pp.83-154.

of it." And, if the Quartermaster had any funds to pay the soldiers as Knox claimed, he was never informed of this. As for Hodgdon, his remarks were nothing but a compilation of "insolence and folly," hardly worthy of comment.⁶⁶

Having reexamined the original testimony, listened to new witnesses and examined the written comments of Knox, Hodgdon and St. Clair, the committee reported its findings on February 15, 1793.⁶⁷

The committee did make some changes in its original report. Hamilton was exonerated of wrongdoing on the charge that he had wrongfully allowed Duer to become contractor without posting a proper bond. First, because he had not been informed that the contract had been transferred to Duer until April, 1791, when it had in fact occurred in January. Second, Hamilton had never considered Duer the contractor in monies issued to him, but had rather considered him the agent of Fowler, the original contractor who had posted a proper bond. In addition the committee agreed that the guns and gun powder were probably in good condition when turned over to the men, which was favorable to Hodgdon.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Committee Report of February 15, 1793, American State Papers, Military Affairs, pp. 41-44; see also Annals, 2nd Cong., 2nd Sess., Cols. 1309-1317.

However, in all other matters of importance the committee stood firm. The testimony provided by Hodgdon to defend the quality of the supplies, other than guns and powder, was rejected by the committee, since the affidavits he offered in his defense were written either by men employed by him or by the manufacturers of the articles themselves. St. Clair was once again absolved of any wrongdoing during the campaign and the implications against Knox in the first report were allowed to stand.⁶⁸

Once again, however, the report had been completed too late for consideration by the whole House. Nor would it be taken up again in the next session. The first congressional investigating committee would end anticlimactically. After two investigations spanning almost a year, no action would be taken on its results. Implications were made against the conduct of Knox and Hodgdon but direct charges were never brought against either. St. Clair's reputation, therefore, was never totally restored by a formal House vote of innocence of serious error in the defeat of his army, and he would be fighting till the end of his life to remove a black mark against his name.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ibid. Evidence of Hodgdon's incompetence may also be found in Wilkinson to ?, November 18, 1792, Wilkinson Papers, Detroit Public Library.

⁶⁹ Still attempting to clear his name many years later, St. Clair published his A Narrative. . . , in 1812.

The immediate governmental response to the defeat of General St. Clair was understandable. The President attempted to explain the past and prepare for the future, and the Congress, while approving the Administration plans for the protection of the frontier, demanded and received an explanation of the causes of the defeat. While no clear political issue emerged from the debates surrounding the defeat, the efforts to undermine or reduce the powers of the Treasury and the prestige of the Secretary of War would be the harbinger of the violent factional debates soon to break out across the nation.

The fact that the defeat of St. Clair did not cause the nation to divide on clear cut party lines does not, however, lessen the fact that the domestic ramifications of the defeat of the army were considerable. Prolonged debate, much of it critical of the Administration's policies, the pressures exerted on the National Government by the frontier for immediate aid, the passage of the bill which would lead to the creation of the army of General Anthony Wayne, the precedent setting decision of the Executive that he may withhold information from Congressional inquiries if he deemed that information was not in the public interest, and the creation of the nation's first Congressional investigating committee, provide ample evidence of the significant developments flowing from the de-

feat of November 4, 1791.

But the defeat had other implications as well. While the frontiersmen had to be protected from further Indian attack, the government was still forced to consider its response to the Indian nations, as well as to their British benefactors.

CHAPTER III

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

DIPLOMATIC RESPONSE

A recurrent nightmare of the English government since the 1783 treaty with the United States, was that the Indian tribes of the northwest, feeling betrayed by their British friends would turn and attack Canadian settlements. That nightmare seemed closer to realization than ever before as British and Canadian officials surveyed the frontier situation in 1791. Several factors had increased their anxiety. First, Americans were moving north of the Ohio River in increasing numbers placing growing pressures on the tribes of the region. Second, an American army was forming in the interior with the apparent objective of marching against the northwestern tribes which England had sworn never to abandon. At the same time, American demands for the surrender of the Northwest Posts, the symbol of British support of the Indians, were becoming more insistent. Finally, rumors of a growing suspicion among the Indians that they had been betrayed by the English began to reach the ears of English officials.

In such a situation, news of St. Clair's defeat

seemed to be a stroke of unexpected good fortune. The newly appointed British minister to the United States, George Hammond, hurriedly informed his superiors in London of the outcome of the battle.¹ A "golden opportunity" seemed to have arrived for England to achieve its goals in the west.² And, the opportunity appeared to have arrived none too soon, for St. Clair's captured correspondence indicated that an American attack on the British-held posts was already contemplated.³

¹Charles R. Ritcheson, Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Towards the United States, 1783-1795 (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969), p.244.

²Sir Henry Clinton to ?, [1792], Clinton Papers, Clements Library.

³St. Clair's correspondence was captured by the Indians and turned over to the English. Their contents startled the officials in Canada for they indicated that St. Clair's mission might have been a prelude to an assault on Detroit. See for example: Lt. Gov. Alured Clarke to Henry Dundas, May 26, 1792, "Colonial Office Records," in Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXIV, p.419. (Hereinafter referred to as C.O.R.). Statements submitted to Henry Dundas by Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe, July 31, 1793, Ibid., p.577; Lt. Gov. Alured Clarke to Henry Dundas, February 11, 1792, Ibid., p.373; Maj. John Smith to Col. A. Gordon, March 3, 1792, Ibid., p.380; Col. McKee to Sir John Johnson, March 5, 1792, Ibid., pp.380-381; Alured Clarke to Henry Dundas, June 13, 1792, Ibid., pp.424-425; Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe Respecting Indians and Posts, August 20, 1792, Ibid., pp.459-466; Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, February 16, 1792, Ibid., pp.377-378; J.G. Simcoe to Colonel McKee, January 23, 1793, in E.A. Cruikshank, ed., The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe with Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada (Toronto: 1923), I, pp.278-279. (Hereinafter referred to as Simcoe Correspondence.); William Robertson to John Askin, March 26, 1792, Askin Papers, Detroit Public Library.

Great Britain's goal was to achieve a negotiated settlement between the Indians and the Americans, with herself as the mediator. Now the moment appeared to have arrived for her to make such a proposal, for, "perhaps this country never had so fair an opportunity of offering mediation either formal or of simple good Offices as at this."⁴ The American government, it was believed, having once more suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the western tribes, and facing a rising storm of protest over the wisdom of the Indian war from its citizens, would finally be willing to settle the frontier crisis to the advantage of Great Britain.⁵

It was this belief that caused Hammond immediately to seek out Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. In the course of their conversation, Hammond dwelt at length on the defeat of St. Clair and suggested that perhaps the English government would look favorably upon a request by the United States that England act as a mediator between

⁴ Sir Henry Clinton to ?, [1792], Clinton Papers, Clements Library.

⁵ Grenville to Hammond, March 17, 1792, in Bernard Mayo, ed., Instructions to the British Ministers of the United States, 1791-1812 (Washington: 1941), pp.25-27. (Hereinafter referred to as Instructions to British Ministers.); Grenville to Hammond, April 25, 1792, Ibid., pp.27-29; Alexander McKee to Sir John Johnson, December 5, 1791, C.O.R., pp.335-337; Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, February 16, 1792, Ibid., pp.377-378.

them and the hostile tribes. Hammond's hopes were quickly dashed as Hamilton rejected the possibility without hesitation. The Indians resided, after all, on American territory, and were in some sense subjects of the United States, stated Hamilton. It was an American problem that would be settled by the United States, peacefully if possible, but, if not, the United States, "was determined to prosecute the war with vigour." Any attempt by a foreign power to intervene or mediate between the American government and the tribes of the west, "would degrade the United States in the estimation of the Indians." The Secretary did not completely shut the door to British assistance. If they should voluntarily take steps to pacify the frontier, the United States would be grateful.⁶

The American government's rejection of mediation by the British was absolute. The President would amplify the American attitude when he wrote:

You may be fully assured, Sir, that such mediation never was asked; that the asking of it was never in contemplation, and, I think I might go further and say, that it not only never will be asked but would be rejected if offered. The United States will never have occasion, I hope, to ask for the interposition of that power or any other, to establish peace within their own territory.⁷

⁶ Conversation with George Hammond, December 15-16, 1791, Hamilton Papers, X, pp.373-376, 375n.7.

⁷ Washington to Gouverneur Morris, June 21, 1792, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.60-64.

Hamilton's suggestion, that Britain might voluntarily help pacify the frontiers, carried with it the clear implication that British assistance to the tribes in some measure accounted for the tenacity of their resistance to American advances. This belief that the British were playing an active role in strengthening the Indians, both materially and diplomatically, against the United States, was very widespread. There is considerable evidence to be found both in the public press and in the private papers of American officials to indicate that British support of the Indians was felt to be the effective cause of the American reverses on the frontier.⁸

The British heatedly denied these accusations, and their denials were accepted with diplomatic civility by the American government. In private, however, American officials were far less circumspect. Jefferson, for example, believed that "the Indians are fully and notoriously supplied by their agents with everything necessary

⁸ For press opinion see chapters IV and V of this paper. The opinions of some American officials recording the significance of British aid to the Indians will be found in subsequent notes. See also for example: Wayne to Knox, July 6, 1792, Wayne Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library; Alex Macomb to Knox, July 14, 1792, Knox Papers, XXX, Massachusetts Historical Society; John Heckenwalder's Information of the Conduct of the British Respecting the Indian War, June 17-23, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Putnam to Knox, July 11, 1792, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library.

to carry on the war."⁹ While the President felt it was British interference and "to the underhanded support which the Indians receive (notwithstanding the open disavowal of it) that all our difficulties proceed."¹⁰

Public indignation against England was especially strong following St. Clair's defeat. So vehement were the attacks in the press, that on two occasions Hammond was forced to offer written denials to the Secretary of State. He rejected "in the most unequivocal manner, the imputation that the King's government in Canada has encouraged or supported the measures of hostility, taken by the Indians in the Western Country."¹¹

Under these circumstances it is little wonder that English offers of mediation were rejected. The United States could not accept the interposition of a country which was believed to be responsible for the very troubles it sought to mediate. In addition, the fact that England

⁹ Jefferson to Gouverneur /sic/ Morris, March 10, 1792, Jefferson Papers, III, pp.338-340.

¹⁰ Washington to Gouverneur Morris, June 21, 1792, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.60-64.

¹¹ George Hammond to Thomas Jefferson, December 14, 1791, in William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Canadian Relations, 1784-1860 (Washington: 1940), I, p.387. (Hereinafter referred to as Diplomatic Correspondence.); George Hammond to Thomas Jefferson, January 30, 1792, Ibid., pp.389-390.

was obviously an interested party in the dispute, precluded any mediator's role for her.

In spite of the American rejection of English mediation, optimism continued to run high in London that the time had arrived to achieve a favorable settlement of the frontier crisis. The attitude was "perhaps this is the important moment in which the unfortunate Terms of that Peace may be altered: perhaps this moment will never return."¹² Operating on this premise, that the defeat of St. Clair was a turning point in their relations with the United States, the British government proceeded to draft new instructions for Hammond. He was strongly urged to continue to pursue acceptance of a mediator's role for England. At the same time, he was to forward a far more radical proposal than Britain had attempted before. The plan was to create a separate Indian nation, an Indian barrier state, which would consist of the entire Northwest Territory, plus areas in western Pennsylvania and northern New York State. This area was to be closed to all further settlement, either English or American, but would be open to trade from either side of the border. If the United States would accept this, the British would agree to relinquish their hold on the Northwest Posts. The Americans,

¹² Samuel Flagg Bemis, Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), rev. ed., p.120.

however, would first have to agree never to occupy those posts. This plan was to be "the Ground and Foundation of such Interference mediation on our part," continued the instructions, since such a solution to the problems of the west would operate "to the permanent Interests of this Country, in that part of the World."¹³

The defeat of St. Clair had a decisive impact upon British thinking regarding the western frontier. For the first time, the surrender of the posts was not tied to the payment of British creditors under the terms of the 1783 treaty. The payment of these long delayed debts paled into insignificance beside the opportunity to detach the entire northwest from American control.

English officials in Canada were enthusiastically behind the barrier state proposal. The Governor General, Lord Dorchester, at this time on leave in England, strongly promoted the project. "The Wisdom and utility of this system," he hoped, "would be so evident to the good sense of the United States, as to conquer every difficulty on their part."¹⁴ Likewise, the newly appointed governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, felt the plan to be ideal.

¹³Grenville to Hammond, March 17, 1792, Instructions to British Ministers, pp.25-26.

¹⁴Lord Dorchester to Henry Dundas, March 23, 1792, C.O.R., pp.386-389.

Not only did he accept it, but he attempted to expand on it as well. Since the post at Detroit was "an essential one," he felt it would be in the best interest of the English to remain in possession of it.¹⁵

This plan, which Hammond was instructed to put into effect, was doomed to failure from the outset. It is difficult to conceive of how supposedly informed men in London and in Canada could seriously entertain the thought that the American government would surrender the entire northwest frontier to the Indians. To do so would have required a drastic reversal of every western policy the government had enunciated since 1783. The simple fact that acceptance of the plan would require the forcible removal of over three thousand people who had already settled north of the Ohio River should have given them pause to think. Perhaps, they were unduly influenced by the anti-war sentiment which abounded in the press following St. Clair's defeat. Certainly, they completely misjudged the impact of the defeat on the American government. Rather than weakening American resolve, it had strengthened it.

Hammond understood the realities of the American situation far better than his superiors. He had already

¹⁵ Extracts from Colonel Simcoe's Letter to Mr. Hammond, by Mr. Givings, June 21, 1792, Simcoe Papers, p.174; Simcoe to Hammond, extract, June 21, 1792, C.O.R., p.426. The Constitutional Act of 1791 had divided Canada into the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada.

warned them that the Americans were in no mood to accept mediation, and was himself well aware that the barrier state project had little if any chance of being considered by them. Still, he ventured to broach the subject to Hamilton in an informal fashion. Hamilton's reply was curt. He "briefly and coldly" informed Hammond that any plan calling for either foreign interference or the cession of territory "would be considered by this government as absolutely impracticable and inadmissable."¹⁶ Informal approaches were also made to Jefferson and Knox with a similar result.¹⁷ Understandably, Hammond decided it would be hopeless to make a formal presentation of the plan to the American government. The response of the United States could not have been more clearly negative and Hammond so reported to his government..

The reaction of the British and Canadian officials to the American rejection of their proposal was one of disappointment and yet understanding of Hammond's decision. It was agreed that his actions had been proper and that no formal presentation of the plan should be made.¹⁸ Simcoe,

¹⁶ Conversation with George Hammond, May 28-29, 1792, Hamilton Papers, XI, pp.446-449. See also Hammond to Grenville, June 13, 1792, Ibid., pp.448-449 note 5.

¹⁷ Ritcheson, p.251.

¹⁸ Grenville to Hammond, August 4, 1792, Instructions to British Ministers, pp.30-31; J.G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, August 20, 1792, Simcoe Papers, p.199; Lt. Gov.

however, was bitter over the American refusal to accept what he considered to be a fair and just offer. Nothing would overcome American intransigence, he believed, short of the overthrow of the Washington Administration. This, he felt, should be done by attempting "to dissolve the Confederacy." Simcoe's anger knew no bounds. England should offer the extensive boundary changes, and, if the Americans refuse, then the English government could actively publicize her case in the newspapers. This would prove to all, the many violations of the 1783 treaty by the Americans, and prove that Congress was "laying in wait till some fortunate occurrences [sic] shall enable it to seize by fraud or other violence what is so just and reasonably withheld." The important thing, he felt, was that "some appeal to popular reasoning must be made." Perhaps, then, the American people would see the benefits to be derived from renouncing Washington and selecting a King to rule in his place.¹⁹ Clearly, Simcoe was bitter that his hopes that "The recent defeat of Mr. St. Clair may be productive of beneficial consequences to the Government of Upper

J.G. Simcoe to George Hammond, September 27, 1792, C.O.R., pp.478-482.

¹⁹Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe Respecting Indians and Posts, August 20, 1792, C.O.R., pp.459-466.

Canada," faded as quickly as they had arisen.²⁰

Hammond, however, still hoped to salvage some victory for England in the aftermath of St. Clair's defeat. The Indians were planning to hold council in the fall of 1792 at the Auglaize.²¹ The purpose of this meeting was to listen to American peace overtures and to decide upon strategies to be followed in negotiating with the United States. Hammond's idea was to convince these Indians that they should "voluntarily" solicit British mediation at the proposed peace conference. While his hopes of success were slight, he felt that such an initiative by the Indians might be viewed differently by the Americans than Hammond's earlier direct offers to mediate.²²

Canadian authorities fully supported this plan of Hammond's, and the machinery was put into motion to secure the Indians' request. Simcoe ordered the deputy Indian superintendent, Alexander McKee, "to endeavour to impress the Indians now meeting from the farthest parts of Canada of themselves to solicit the King's good offices." Care

²⁰Lieut. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, February 16, 1792, Ibid., pp.377-378.

²¹That is, at the junction of the Maumee and Auglaize Rivers in present day Defiance County, Ohio.

²²Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to George Hammond, September 27, 1792, C.O.R., pp.478-482.

was to be taken that the American government would not be aware that the offer originated from the English. The excuse to be offered by the Indians was that a British presence was essential since only they could provide the tribes with the documents necessary to argue their case with the Americans.²³

McKee did his job well and the Indians proceeded to make their request of the British.²⁴ Once more the topic of mediation was to be presented to the American government. The result was familiar. The Administration rejected the concept immediately. Hammond, however, did achieve one small success. The Americans reluctantly agreed to allow some British military officials to be present at the negotiation. But, they were to attend only in the capacity of spectators who could explain the "nature and tendency of the American offers."²⁵ Hammond's last hope of bringing about a quick and peaceful settlement of the frontier crisis had ended.

²³ Ibid. See also Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to Col. A. McKee, August 30, 1792, C.O.R., pp.472-475.

²⁴ Journal of William Johnson, October 7, 1792, C.O.R., p.471; Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to George Hammond, November 17, 1792, Ibid., pp.516-517; Hostile Indians to Simcoe, November, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.324.

²⁵ Benis, p.132; J.G. Simcoe to Hammond, January 21, 1793, Simcoe Papers, pp.277-278.

The concept of mediation and the possible creation of an Indian barrier state were not in themselves new ones. Lord Dorchester had broached the possibility of mediation in early 1791 and the former Governor General Haldimand, had conceived of the Indian barrier state as early as 1783.²⁶ It was not, however, until after the news of St. Clair's defeat that the English had the temerity to attempt to use this diplomatic initiative against the Americans. Though doomed to failure from the outset, it presents clear evidence of the significance of the St. Clair defeat in Anglo-American diplomacy.

While resisting British interference, the United States had to develop its response to the Indians in the aftermath of the army's defeat. The victory of the western tribes over St. Clair had generated a sense of confidence and tribal unity which greatly increased the threat to the American frontier. The government had immediately begun arrangements for the creation of a new and enlarged military force to cope with this threat. But, for 1792, at least, the army of Anthony Wayne existed only on paper. Realizing this, defenseless settlers from western Pennsylvania, down the Ohio River to Kentucky, were in a state of frenzy.

²⁶

Haldimand to North, November 27, 1783, quoted in Orpha E. Leavitt, "British Policy on the Canadian Frontier," Wisconsin Historical Publications, Proceedings of the Society, (1915), pp.151-185.

Anxious pleas for help soon reached the desks of the governors of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky and the Northwest Territory, as well as the President of the United States.²⁷

The President soon faced a challenge even closer to home. A vocal and growing opposition to the Indian War had begun to appear both in Congress and in the press. A nationwide debate on the merits of American Indian policy had developed. Much of the debate was highly critical of the Administration's handling of the frontier crisis. A common complaint was that war and not peace was the real goal of government. Administration efforts to secure a negotiated settlement on the frontier were attacked as having been half-hearted and insincere.²⁸

Demands from the frontier for aid, the lack of an army in the field to respond to those demands, and a public opposition to a continuance of the war led the Administration to launch a large scale peace offensive in 1792. Hopes that it would succeed were slight. However, even

²⁷ See for example: Memorial from Inhabitants of the Counties of Westmoreland, Washington, Fayette, and Alleghany, to the Governor of Pennsylvania, December 21, 1791, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.216; From Representatives of the County of Ohio to Governor of Virginia, December 12, 1791, Ibid., p.222; Governor of Pennsylvania to the President, December 22, 1791, Ibid., p.215; Knox to Gov. of Ky., July 12, 1792, Wilkin-son Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

²⁸ The debate over Administration policies will be examined in chapters IV and V.

if it failed, it would serve several purposes. The pressures on the frontier would be temporarily relieved; the army would be given the necessary time to prepare its march; and, public opinion would be placated.

The first step in the Administration's program was to convince the Six Nations to act as mediators between the United States and the hostile tribes of the West. Those tribes were planning to hold a general council in the summer of 1792, and the American desire was to have the chiefs of the Six Nations at that council to argue on their behalf. To achieve this goal, the chiefs of the Six Nations were invited to Philadelphia, ostensibly to discuss ways and means the United States could aid their tribes to achieve the blessings of civilization.²⁹

The Six Nations did not accept the invitation immediately. Rather, they first sought the advice of the British at Fort Niagara. The position of the British was a delicate one. They did not want a war with the United States, yet it was essential to the safety of their own settlements in Canada that the western tribes be satisfied with any settlement they reached with the Americans. Un-

²⁹Timothy Pickering to the Five Nations, December 16, 1791, C.O.R., pp.370-371. See also A Statement of the Measures Taken and the Overtures Made, to Precure a Peace with the Indians of the Northwest of the Ohio, Secretary of War to the Rev. Samuel Kirkland, December 20, 1791, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.226.

derstandably, they wished the tribes to negotiate from a position of strength. This meant avoiding, if at all possible, the fragmentation of the Indians into individual tribes during negotiations. The Indian federation had never been stronger than following St. Clair's defeat and the English pointed out to them that the American invitation had been written eight days after news of St. Clair's defeat had arrived, "yet they take not the least notice of that affair." Surely, the chiefs could see that the invitation was simply a ploy to divide the tribes and use them for America's selfish reasons.³⁰

The chiefs debated for a time but soon decided that their best interests lay in accepting the American invitation. Some fifty tribal leaders, therefore, travelled to Philadelphia and attended a conference lasting from March 13 to April 30, 1792. They were treated to the hospitality of the capital, assured that the Americans wanted no more lands of the Indians but, rather, only desired a lasting peace. As a token of America's sincerity, the Indians were offered a \$1,500 annuity.³¹

³⁰Proceedings of a Private Council, January 31, 1792, C.O.R., pp.367-369.

³¹William L. Stone, Life of Joseph Brant, 2 vols. (New York: 1838), II, p.326; Speech of the President of the United States to the Chiefs and Representatives of the Five Nations of Indians in Philadelphia, March 23, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.231; Speech of the Secretary of War to all the Sachems and Warriors. . . , April 4, 1792, Ibid.,

Finally, they were approached on the main point of business. The government formally requested that they act as mediators with the western Indians by attending the conference to be held at the Auglaize later in the year. They were to bring with them an American message that peace and not additional land was the nation's desire. Furthermore, the Americans were willing to grant compensation for any lands still in dispute. Should the western tribes be willing to meet at a peace conference with the Americans, the government would immediately appoint commissioners to meet with the tribal chiefs wherever they should choose.³²

Having considered the American request at length, the chiefs decided to accept the sincerity of the American desires for peace. They agreed to travel west to deliver the American message.

It was not the American intention to rely solely on these chiefs to transmit their desires for peace. Soon, the roads west were crowded with American peace emissaries. Early in 1792, the War Department sponsored a rather quixotic peace mission under the supervision of two traders,

p.230; Speech of Timothy Pickering to the Sachems and Chiefs of the Five Nations, April 30, 1792, Ibid., pp.232-233; Washington to the Senate, March 23, 1792, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.9-10.

³²Ibid.

William Steedman and Peter Pond. These two were to travel to the western nations in order to ascertain the Indian's attitudes toward peace following St. Clair's defeat. While on their mission, they were instructed to keep their identities secret. Should the tribes they encountered seem to be amenable toward peace, they were empowered to invite them to Philadelphia. To make their jobs more difficult, they were cautioned that the Indians must first request peace of the United States since they, and not the Americans, had been the aggressors. Just how the government expected these two to pull such a coup, is difficult to explain. At any rate, they never got beyond the British-held post at Fort Niagara, where they were turned back by the officer in charge.³³

A further attempt to get a message through to the western tribes was undertaken by Captain Alexander Trueman of the First United States Regiment. Trueman received orders to proceed to the villages of the tribes living near the Maumee-Wabash portage, and ask for an immediate end to frontier hostilities as a first step toward a lasting peace.³⁴

³³Instructions to Captain Peter Pond and William Steedman, January 9, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.227; Dale Van Every, Ark of Empire: The American Frontier, 1784-1803 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p.246. See also Knox to Wilkinson, February 11, 1792, Wilkinson Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

³⁴Instructions to Captain Alexander Trueman of the First United States Regiment, April 3, 1792, A.S.P., I.A.,

The Americans, for their part, had already sent out instructions to all civilian and military authorities to cease offensive operations immediately.³⁵

Trueman was to explain to the Indians that the United States wanted only peace with the tribes. No lands would be required of them other than those ceded by earlier treaties. Compensation for lands already lost would be offered to all who had not yet received it. Should the Indians prove agreeable to this offer, they were to be invited to Philadelphia for a peace conference.³⁶

The defeat of St. Clair was certainly the main factor behind this flurry of American peace initiatives. The sudden intensity of the American efforts to negotiate made this clear to the Indians. Yet, Trueman, as well as later American emissaries, was to declare to the tribes

I, pp.229-230.

³⁵ Knox to Wilkinson, March 10, 1792, Wilkinson Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Knox to Governor of Kentucky, July 12, 1792, Ibid.; Wilkinson to Commanding Officers of the Militia of Kentucky, April 3, 1792, C.O.R., pp.410-411; Knox to Wayne, June 15, 1792, in Richard C. Knopf, ed., Anthony Wayne: A Name in Arms: The Wayne-Knox-Pickering-McHenry Correspondence, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1960), pp.17-20. (Hereinafter referred to as Knopf, Correspondence.); Pickering to Israel Chapin, May 14, 1792, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

³⁶ Instructions to Captain Alexander Trueman of the First United States Regiment, April 3, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.229-230.

that the defeat of St. Clair had nothing to do with their efforts. Rather, the American efforts were said to spring from the long standing desire of the Americans to live in harmony with the Indians.³⁷ But, the repeated American denial of the significance of St. Clair's defeat probably served only to convince the tribes that the opposite was true.

Meanwhile, Colonel John Hardin of Kentucky was receiving instructions similar to those of Trueman. Hardin was to visit the Wyandot villages at Sandusky, assure them of America's pacific intentions, and invite their chiefs to Philadelphia. If they refused to travel to the American capital, but were inclined towards peace, then Hardin was to work in conjunction with Trueman and organize "as general a convention of the tribes as possible" somewhere on the frontier. American commissioners would then be sent to negotiate a treaty.³⁸

While Trueman and Hardin were travelling westward, two Indian chiefs were travelling separately to the nation's capital. The first was the chief of the Stockbridge Indians of Massachusetts, Hendrick Aupaumut. Hendrick was asked

³⁷ Ibid. See also Instructions to Brigadier General Rufus Putnam, May 22, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.234-236.

³⁸ Brigadier General James Wilkinson to Colonel John Hardin, May 20, 1792, C.O.R., pp.414-416.

to attend the forthcoming Indian council and to argue on America's behalf that the only goal of the United States was a just and honorable settlement with the Indians.

Once again, the tribes were to be informed that no additional lands were to be required of them and that the United States would compensate for lands already lost. Hendrick, who was known to be friendly toward the Americans, accepted the assignment immediately.³⁹

The second Indian chief to arrive at Philadelphia in the late spring of 1792, harbored far less friendly feelings towards the United States than had Hendrick. Joseph Brant had long worked in concert with the British to stem the advance of American frontier settlement and his prestige among the western tribes was considerable. Securing his agreement to mediate between the United States and the western tribes would be a significant step towards achieving a satisfactory peace settlement.⁴⁰

³⁹ Instructions to Captain Hendrick Aupaumut, Chief of the Stockbridge Indians from Knox, May 8, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.233.

⁴⁰ For American efforts to persuade Brant to visit Philadelphia see: Kirkland to Brant (Extract), February 17, 1792, in Stone, Life of Brant, II, pp.320-326; Knox to Brant, February 25, 1792, Ibid.; Brant to Knox, March 27, 1792, Ibid.; Knox to Brant, April 23, 1792, Ibid. Also relevant to this issue are: Kirkland to Brant, January 3, 1792, C.O.R., pp.361-363; Kirkland to Brant, January 25, 1792, Ibid., pp.364-365; Timothy Pickering to the Five Nations, December 16, 1791, Ibid., pp.370-371; To Captain Joseph Brant -- per Mr. James M. Reed, February 25, 1792,

Brant was under considerable pressure from the British not to accept the American invitations. Fearful of weakening the Indian federation, the British tried at length to convince Brant that an acceptance of the American offer would be a disservice to the cause of the Indians. The British were, however, walking a tight rope. While encouraging the Indians to stand fast in the face of American advances, they consistently declared their inability to openly aid the tribes in any way. It was a desire for peace, combined with his frustration over this policy of the English, that would finally convince him to visit Philadelphia. Brant had grown tired of "the evasive answers. . .received from the officers of Government, when applied to for assistance. . .if Great Britain wishes us to defend our Country, why not tell us so in plain language."⁴¹

Leaving Fort Niagara in May, Brant arrived safely in Philadelphia in mid-June, 1792. In conversations with Washington and Knox, he was strongly encouraged to do his

A.S.P., I.A., I, p.228; Secretary of War to General Israel Chapin, April 23, 1792, Ibid., p.231.

⁴¹Brant to McKee, May 23, 1792, C.O.R., pp.417-418. For British efforts to discourage Brant from accepting the American invitation, see Capt. A. Gordon to Brant, March 20, 1792, Ibid., pp.385-386; Capt. A. Gordon to Major General Clarke, April 19, 1792, Ibid., pp.398-399; Letter from Col. A. Gordon, May 30, 1792, Ibid., p.419.

part to help set up a peace conference with the western nations. The Administration exerted a great amount of effort to convince Brant that peace was the only objective of the United States. To further insure Brant's acceptance of the American request, Brant was offered gifts of money and lands if he would only agree to deliver the American message to the Indian council.⁴²

Brant, though convinced that the United States was sending too many emissaries to the tribes, and fearing that he might have lost prestige among the western tribes for not having participated in the action against St. Clair,⁴³ agreed to attend the upcoming Indian council on America's behalf. He refused all offers of gifts, however, since he was "actuated by motives of honor, and preferred the interests of his Majesty, and the credit of my nation, to my own private welfare."⁴⁴

Brant's concern that the numbers of American peace initiatives might simply distract the Indians was understandable as the government had already decided to make yet another effort to reach the Indians. On May 5, 1792,

⁴²Stone, Life of Brant, pp.328-329; Secretary of War to Brant, June 27, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.236-237.

⁴³Conversation with Capt. Hendrick, February 5, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁴⁴Quoted in Stone, Life of Brant, p.328.

Rufus Putnam was appointed Brigadier General and instructed to attend the council of the Indians in order to convince them of the peaceful intentions of the United States.⁴⁵

Putnam was instructed in depth for his mission. He was provided with all papers and documents relevant to earlier Indian negotiations. His orders were to "in the strongest and most explicit terms renounce, on the part of the United States, all claim to any Indian land which shall not have been ceded by fair treaties, made with the Indian nations." The United States, he was to declare, wanted no more than to help educate and civilize the Indians. He was to emphasize that peace efforts on the part of the United States were in no way owing to the defeat of St. Clair, "but that they arise from the purest desires to avoid the further effusion of blood."⁴⁶

Loaded down with silver medals and jeweled ornaments as gifts for the western tribes,⁴⁷ Putnam proceeded

⁴⁵ Knox to Putnam, May 5, 1792, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library; Instructions to Brigadier General Rufus Putnam, May 22, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.234-236.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Altogether Putnam brought twenty silver medals, thirty silver arm and wrist bands, twelve dozen silver broaches, thirty pairs of nose jewels, thirty pairs of ear jewels and two large white wampum belts with a silver medal suspended to each, bearing the arms of the United States. See receipt signed by Putnam, May 22, 1792, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library.

westward in June, 1792. Shortly thereafter, the American peace movement began to disintegrate rapidly. In early July, Putnam began to hear rumors that both Hardin and Trueman had been captured and put to death by hostile Indians. Soon, the rumors were confirmed.⁴⁸ Putnam immediately informed Knox that the chances for peace had grown exceedingly slim for "from the act it seems nothing but War is to be expected from the Grand Council."⁴⁹ General Wayne was also informed of the fate of the American messengers and agreed with Putnam's assessment of the situation.⁵⁰

Wayne, whose army was rapidly forming near Pittsburgh, was especially bitter over the murder of the American emissaries. "There can be but little expectation of an Honorable and lasting peace," he wrote, "with a victorious, haughty and insidious enemy." Unfortunately, according to Wayne, "the prevailing disposition of a Majority

⁴⁸ Putnam to Knox, July 7, 1792, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library; Putnam to Knox, July 11, 1792, Ibid.; Putnam to Knox, July 14, 1792, Ibid.; Putnam to Knox, July 22, 1792, Ibid.

⁴⁹ Putnam to Knox, July 14, 1792, Ibid.; Knox's response to Putnam is dated August 7, 1792, Ibid. See also Putnam to Knox, August 16, 1792, Ibid.

⁵⁰ Putnam to Wayne, July 10, 1792, Ibid. See also Wayne to Putnam, August 6, 1792, Ibid.

in Congress," had forced the government to make these attempts at peace prior to reopening hostilities. In such a situation, Trueman and Hardin had been "Martyrs to this State policy."⁵¹

Although there is no evidence that the murders of the two American officers were done on the orders of the Indian council, Putnam assumed that to be the case, and immediately abandoned hopes of carrying out his original mission.⁵² Wishing to salvage some success from his mission, Putnam, with the approval of Knox, instead travelled further westward and successfully negotiated a treaty with the Illinois-Wabash tribes at Fort Vincennes.⁵³ Even this limited success was to be denied Putnam, however, as the Congress would later refuse to ratify the pact he had negotiated. The reason behind the Senate's rejection of the

⁵¹Wayne to Wilkinson, August 5, 1792, Ibid.

⁵²Putnam to Knox, July 11, 1792, Ibid.; Putnam to Knox, July 14, 1792, Ibid.; An Indian denial of involvement in the murders of Hardin and Trueman is found in "Western Indians to President Washington," Simcoe Papers, p.283.

⁵³A Journal of the Proceedings at a Council held with the Indians of the Wabash and Illinois at Post Vincents, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library; Treaty with the Wabash and Illinois Indians, September 27, 1792, Ibid.; Putnam to Knox, December 20, 1792, Ibid.; Washington to the Secretary of War, September 3, 1792, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.139-140.

treaty was that it did not contain a preemption clause that the government felt to be essential in any treaty with the Indians.⁵⁴

Putnam's mission had been a failure for American diplomacy. The only benefit arising from it according to the President was that it would "shew that nothing in the compass of the Executive has been unessayed to convince the hostile Indians of the pacific and equitable measures and intentions of the Government of the Union towards them."⁵⁵ As the general Indian council prepared to meet, the American attitude was decidedly negative.

When the council opened at the Auglaize in late September, 1792, only the chiefs of the Six Nations would be present to represent the views of the United States. Chief Hendrick was not allowed by the British to proceed beyond Detroit. His only contribution was to hand his messages over to Alexander McKee for transmittal to the council.⁵⁶ Joseph Brant, meanwhile, so delayed his departure

⁵⁴ Knox to Putnam, February 11, 1793, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library; Communicated to Senate by Washington, February 13, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.338; Reginald Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812 (Michigan State University Press, 1967), p.94.

⁵⁵ Washington to the Secretary of War, September 3, 1792, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.139-140.

⁵⁶ Knox to Washington, December 6, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.322; Examination of the Senaka Chiefs respecting Hendricks, February 5, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

for the westward that by the time he arrived the council had already adjourned.⁵⁷

American hopes therefore rested on the shoulders of the representatives of the Six Nations. Their arguments, however, went unheeded. The Indians, still elated over their victory the previous year, and suspicious of the intentions of the Six Nations since they had agreed to represent the enemy, furiously assailed the American offers. If the United States sincerely desired peace, why was a large American army forming in the west? If they wanted no more land, why did St. Clair's captured correspondence speak of building forts at the Miami towns and either driving the Indians from the land or else civilizing them so they could work like pack animals?⁵⁸

Should the Americans sincerely desire to negotiate, the Six Nations were informed, they may do so. But, they first must agree to surrender to the Indians all lands north of the Ohio River. "We do not want compensation; We want a restoration of our Lands which He holds under false pretenses," the tribes declared. Only after the

⁵⁷In Conversations with Capt. Hendrick, February 5, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁵⁸Proceedings of a General Council of Indian Nations, C.O.R., pp.483-498.

Americans agreed to this surrender of territory would the Indians be willing to meet the following year.⁵⁹ This then was to be the message that the Six Nations were to carry back to the Americans.

Before transmitting the decisions of the Auglaize council to the Americans, the Six Nations decided to hold a council of their own at Buffalo Creek. It was from this council that the United States was informed of the decision of the western nations. Their message, however, was garbled, and whether by accident or design, the Americans were not informed that the Ohio River boundary had become a sine qua non for all future negotiations.⁶⁰ When Secretary of War, Henry Knox, would accept the Indian invitation to meet, he did so without realizing this all important prerequisite.⁶¹

The circumstances surrounding the forthcoming conference with the Indians were particularly galling to the

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Chapin to Knox, November 22, 1792, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.323; Indian Speech at Buffalo Creek, November 16, 1792, Ibid., pp.323-324; Speech from Six Nations to the President, November, 1792, Ibid., p.324. See also Speech of the Cornplanter and New Arrow to Wayne, December 8, 1792, Ibid., p.337.

⁶¹Knox to the Western Indians, December 12, 1792, Sincoe Papers, p.270; Knox to the Western Indians, February 23, 1793, Ibid., p.295.

Americans. The Indians had requested the British to be present at the negotiations and the United States had been forced to agree to the presence of British military officers to advise the Indians.⁶² In addition, the British had also agreed to a request from the Indians to provide the conference with supplies -- an act increasing British prestige among the Indians.⁶³ The Americans had hoped to increase their influence among the tribes by providing supplies themselves but were informed that the Governor General of Canada, Lord Dorchester, had issued a standing order against such a possibility.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the location of the proposed conference was to be within close distance of the British-controlled post at Detroit. The council, therefore, was to be held on American territory, but for all practical purposes, would be entirely under the control of the British.

The peace conference was of crucial importance to

⁶² See above notes 24 and 25.

⁶³ Proceedings of a General Council of Indians, C.O.R., p.497; Speech of Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to the Indians, October 9, 1792, Ibid., pp.499-501.

⁶⁴ J.G. Simcoe to Hammond, January 21, 1793, Simcoe Papers, pp.277-278; J.G. Simcoe to Colonel McKee, January 23, 1793, Ibid., pp.278-279; Alexander Hamilton to George Hammond, December 29, 1792, C.O.R., p.519; William Hull to the Secretary of the Treasury, February 6, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

the American government, however, and in spite of the adverse circumstances surrounding it, preparations for the event proceeded. The Cabinet voted unanimously to attend the council in spite of Dorchester's refusal to allow the Americans to provide supplies for the Indians. More importantly, they voted to relinquish lands already ceded by the Indians if that were necessary to achieve peace. No lands which were already sold and marked on maps, however, were to be surrendered.⁶⁵

To represent the American government at the conference, Washington chose a distinguished delegation consisting of Benjamin Lincoln, Timothy Pickering and Beverley Randolph.⁶⁶ Since the treaty which was about to be held was "of great moment to the interests and peace of this Country. . . ,"⁶⁷ Washington ordered his cabinet to meet in the War Office on March 25, 1792, to draft full and detailed instructions for the commissioners.

⁶⁵ Cabinet Opinion of Indian War, February 25, 1793, Jefferson Papers, p.191.

⁶⁶ Washington to Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, January 23, 1793, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.312-313, 313 note 89; Knox to Wayne, March 2, 1793, Knopf, Correspondence, p.195; Instructions to Benjamin Lincoln, of Massachusetts, Beverley Randolph, of Virginia, Timothy Pickering, of Pennsylvania, Commissioners appointed for treating with the Indians Northwest of the Ohio, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.340-342.

⁶⁷ Washington to the Secretaries of State, Treasury, War and the Attorney General, March 21, 1793, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.395-397.

Meanwhile, to further assure that the peace conference would have every chance of success, the government again ordered a complete cessation of hostilities along the frontier. Orders were sent to civilian and military officers to permit no actions to take place which might in any way alarm the Indians or jeopardize the safety of the peace commissioners.⁶⁸

The instructions finally approved for the commissioners contained significant concessions and retreats from the belligerent positions taken by the United States before St. Clair's defeat. First, in exchange for a treaty confirming the United States in lands ceded it by earlier treaties, the United States would agree to surrender all posts within the agreed boundaries, except those held by the British. Secondly, the United States would pay the tribes \$50,000 in goods, and a \$10,000 annuity. Furthermore, the United States would be willing to yield lands previously granted in earlier treaties so long as that land had not yet been sold by the United States. In addition,

⁶⁸Washington to Governor Thomas Mifflin, April 25, 1793, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.432-433; Knox to Wayne, April 13, 1793, Knopf, Correspondence, pp.217-219; Knox to Wayne, April 20, 1793, Ibid., pp.221-225; Wayne to Knox, April 27, 1793, Ibid., pp.228-231; Proclamation of General Anthony Wayne, April 22, 1793, Territorial Papers, II, p.452.

liberal compensation would be offered to any tribes, which had not already received it, for lands surrendered by earlier treaties. Finally, the United States was willing to admit that it had erred in the negotiation of earlier treaties. The right of soil did belong to the Indians. The United States had not acquired complete ownership of the land at the treaty of 1783 as she had earlier maintained.⁶⁹

Armed with these instructions, the American commissioners proceeded to leave for the council which was to meet in early June. Optimism did not run high regarding their chances of success. Washington made his pessimism evident when he stated that there was

little, if anything more to be expected from the proposed Negotiation of Peace with the hostile Tribes assembled at Sandusky (tho' perhaps, it is best for me to be silent on this head) than in case of failure, to let the good people of these States see that the Executive has left nothing unessayed to accomplish this desirable end; to remove those suspicions which have been unjustly entertained that Peace is not its object. . . .⁷⁰

Jefferson too was extremely doubtful of the success of the negotiation. When he heard that the opening of the council might be delayed, he felt this to be a ruse of the Indians

⁶⁹ Instructions to Benjamin Lincoln, of Massachusetts, Beverley Randolph, of Virginia, Timothy Pickering, of Pennsylvania, Commissioners appointed for treating with the Indians Northwest of the Ohio, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.340-342.

⁷⁰ Washington to Governor Henry Lee, May 6, 1793, Washington Writings, XXXII, pp.448-450.

to prevent Wayne from marching until it was too late in the year to do so. Chances for the successful outcome of the conference were so slight, that Jefferson felt, perhaps, Wayne's army should be given immediate orders to attack.⁷¹ Possibly, it was in response to his concerns in this area that the commissioners were instructed to notify Wayne immediately if the mission failed.⁷² Significantly, Wayne was ordered to be ready to march by August 1, 1793.⁷³

However, the Administration felt that the strong antiwar sentiment in the country made it imperative for the government to proceed. So long as "the sentiments of the great mass of the Citizens of the United States are adverse in the extreme to an Indian War," the government was forced to make the effort to achieve a negotiated peace.⁷⁴ Fur-

⁷¹Jefferson to Gouverneur [sic] Morris, June 13, 1793, Jefferson Papers, III, pp.580-582; Jefferson to Pinckney, June 14, 1793, Ibid., III, pp.582-584.

⁷²Knox to Pickering, Lincoln and Randolph, April 29, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁷³Knox to Wayne, April 20, 1793, Knopf, Correspondence, pp.221-225.

⁷⁴Knox to Wayne, January 5, 1792, Ibid., pp.164-167. For similar sentiments see also, Knox to Wilkinson, February 11, 1792, Wilkinson Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Putnam to Wilkinson, July 3, 1792, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library; Wayne to Wilkinson, August 5, 1792, Ibid.; Wayne to Sharp Delany, August 24, 1792, Wayne Papers, Clements Library.

thermore, even an unsuccessful negotiation might be an asset, since it would forestall Indian attacks "until our army is recruited."⁷⁵

Influenced by the fate of the peace emissaries of the previous year, the three American commissioners decided to approach the council by way of the British at Fort Niagara. Arriving to a cordial welcome by Governor Simcoe, the American delegation was immediately informed that the slowness of the Indians in assembling would delay the opening of the council by at least one month.⁷⁶ In the meantime, they were to remain at Niagara until allowed to advance by the British. While "the anxiety of the President still continues exceedingly great for the entire success of their mission,"⁷⁷ the commissioners could but while away their time at Simcoe's residence. Not even the falls at Niagara were an impressive sight to the disgruntled commissioners.⁷⁸

⁷⁵Cass to Putnam, June 8, 1792, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library.

⁷⁶Simcoe to Commissioners, May 17, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Randolph and Pickering to Knox, May 21, 1793, Ibid.

⁷⁷Knox to Commissioners, June 6, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁷⁸Journal of a Treaty held in 1793, with the Indian Tribes northwest of the Ohio by Commissioners of the United States, in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, V, 3rd series (Boston: 1836), pp.109-176. (Hereinafter referred to as "Lincoln's Journal"). Lincoln felt that the size of the Falls at Niagara had been exaggerated

Disagreements among the Indian nations once they had assembled would further delay the opening of the council. The western nations such as the Shawnee, Wyandot and the Miami were adamantly insisting upon the Ohio River boundary. Brant, as spokesman for tribes such as the Six Nations, Ottawa and Potawatomis, was arguing in vain for a more moderate position. He realized that the Americans would not accept the Ohio boundary and urged a compromise line located along the Muskingum. The western nations refused to listen.⁷⁹

Two points did concern the western tribes however. First, they seriously doubted that the American commissioners fully understood the Indians' sine qua non for negotiation -- the Ohio River boundary. Second, the army, under Wayne's leadership had begun to occupy the area about Fort Washington. Was this in preparation for an immediate invasion of the Indian country? To provide answers to these two questions, the Indians decided to send a delegation to Niagara to meet with the American commissioners.⁸⁰

and was very disappointed that they were not more impressive.

⁷⁹Horsman, "The British Indian Department and the Abortive Treaty of Lower Sandusky, 1793," Ohio Historical Quarterly, LXX (July, 1961), pp.190-213.

⁸⁰Lincoln's Journal, pp.109-176; Pickering Journal, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Meanwhile, the three Americans had finally been given permission to depart for Detroit. Having travelled to Fort Erie, the American delegation boarded the Dunmore, a ship provided them by Simcoe, and on July 5, while awaiting favorable winds, a vessel appeared on the horizon which proved to be the ship carrying the Indian delegation sent by the council.⁸¹

The Indians insisted on talking to the Americans only in the presence of Simcoe. This necessitated the return of the entire party to Fort Niagara, where a council took place July 7-8, 1793. Brant, as chief spokesman for the Indians, asked the Americans if Wayne's army was preparing an offensive and whether the commissioners were empowered to negotiate a new boundary. The Americans explained that the Army was under strict orders not to take any hostile action, and that they were indeed able to redraw the boundary line between the tribes and the United States. The Indians, apparently satisfied with these answers, returned to the council on the Maumee.⁸²

The basic problem was that, again, the Indians had failed to make clear that they were insisting on the acceptance of the Ohio River boundary. Brant had obviously

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

and deliberately refrained from mentioning it. He knew that if he had, negotiations would end immediately. Apparently he was stalling for time to return to the council and persuade the assembled chiefs that it was in their own interests to temporize their demands in the interest of peace.

Once more the American delegation set out for Fort Erie to embark for Detroit. This they did on July 14, arriving at the mouth of the Detroit River on July 21.⁸³ Again, the commissioners had it brought home to them how completely they were under the control of the British.. They were refused either to be allowed to proceed to the council or enter the Fort at Detroit. Rather, they were forced to stay some 18 miles from that post at the home of Matthew Elliot, an aide of Alexander McKee's.⁸⁴ The Americans had little to do but wait.

Finally, on July 29, a delegation of Indians from the council appeared at Elliot's house to talk with the commissioners. Now, for the first time, the Americans were told that the Indians considered the Ohio boundary

⁸³ See entries in Ibid., for July 14-21. Also see Jacob Lindley, et.al., "Expedition to Detroit, 1793," in Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections, XVII, pp.614-650.

⁸⁴ Ibid. Also see Commissioners of the United States to McKee, July 21, 1793, Simcoe Papers, p.395.

to be non-negotiable. The Indians demanded the immediate removal of all settlers living north of the River.⁸⁵

The commissioners argued that they had no authority to agree to such a boundary. Nor could any American ever conceive of so doing. The land had already been sold and settlers had already built their homes upon it. The United States would admit earlier errors and grant that the right of the soil belonged to the tribes. In addition, they would compensate liberally for any additional lands the Indians might be willing to surrender. Some lands might even be returned by the United States if that were necessary in the interests of peace.⁸⁶

On this note, the Indian delegation left to deliver the American answer to the assembled chiefs waiting at the council. Much debate took place over the merits of the American offer and once again the split between the western tribes and the more moderate nations represented by Brant was apparent. While some tribes were willing to temporize, the Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, Miami and others refused to budge on their demands for an Ohio River boundary line.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Western Indians to the Commissioners of the United States, July 27, 1793, Simcoe Papers, pp.401-402; Pickering Journal, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Lincoln's Journal, pp.109-176.

⁸⁶ Reply of the Commissioners of the United States to the Indians, C.O.R., pp.579-585.

⁸⁷ Brant to Simcoe, July 28, 1793, Simcoe Papers,

The Americans meanwhile waited nearly two weeks for a response to their offer. Frustrated at the delay and refused an English escort to the site of the council, the commissioners threatened to leave for the assembled Indians without the permission of the English. Perhaps this threat had its effect, for, two days later, the long-awaited Indian response arrived.⁸⁸

The western tribes had won out over Brant's moderate position. The council would not settle for less than the Ohio River boundary. The American concessions, they declared, were not concessions at all. The right to the land had always belonged to the Indians, so why should they consider it a concession that the Americans finally admitted to the truth? As for lands granted under earlier treaties, this had been done under duress and was therefore invalid. They then had an ingenious suggestion for the Americans. Since they were so concerned with the poor settlers who had already purchased land and settled north of the Ohio, why did not the United States compensate them for their losses? The Americans could use the

pp.402-403. Also see Reginald Horsman, "The British Indian Department," pp.206-209.

⁸⁸Pickering Journal, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Lincoln's Journal, pp.149-159.

gifts, annuities and compensations offered the Indians to pay these people. In addition, to further recompense them, they could be given all the thousands of dollars that had been previously spent to carry on the Indian War. A peace on the basis of the Ohio River boundary would, therefore, be of real benefit to American settlers. "We shall be persuaded that you mean to do us justice," the chiefs concluded, "if you agree, that the Ohio shall remain the boundary between us."⁸⁹

The commissioners having read the Indians' reply to their offers, stated simply, "The negotiation is therefore at an end."⁹⁰ The United States would not accede to the Ohio boundary. Knox and Wayne were both notified of the failure of the negotiations, and the commissioners began their long trek eastward.⁹¹ The much sought after Indian council had ended before it began.

⁸⁹ Reply of the Indians to the Commissioners of the United States, C.O.R., pp.587-592.

⁹⁰ Pickering Journal, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. (Their baggage was ordered to be put aboard the Dunmore immediately, and according to one observer, the future, ". . . all on a sudden, looked gloomy." See "Joseph Moore's Journal," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections, XVII, p.658.).

⁹¹ Commissioners of the U.S. to Wayne, August 23, 1793, Wayne Papers, Detroit Public Library; Commissioners to Knox, August 21, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Letter, September 11, 1793, Hamtramck Papers, Burton Historical Collections, Detroit Public Library.

Disappointment over the failure of the conference was in some ways more apparent in Canada than in the United States. Simcoe believed that the Indian threat to Canada had been significantly increased. The failure of the peace talks made war inevitable. If the Indians won they would blame the English for not offering them more aid, if they lost they would blame the English for their defeat. Either way portended disaster to Simcoe, since it would lead to an assault upon Canadian settlements. His last hopes that "Sinclair's [sic] defeat would pave the way for a favorable settlement," had been crushed.⁹²

As for the Americans, they had been pessimistic from the outset. Jefferson reflected the Administration's attitude toward the outcome when he stated,

Our negotiations with the northwestern Indians have completely failed, so that war must settle our difference. We expected nothing else, and had gone into the negotiations only to prove to all our Citizens that peace was unattainable on terms which any one of them would admit. . . .⁹³

In Philadelphia, Canada, London and along the frontier, the failure of the American peace commissioners had but one meaning -- a renewal of the war.

⁹²Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to George Hammond, August 24, 1793, C.O.R., pp.599-601.

⁹³Jefferson to Thomas Pinckney, November 27, 1793, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, p.60.

The defeat of Arthur St. Clair had had a significant effect upon American diplomacy. It provoked new diplomatic initiatives from the British. Seeing an opportunity to pressure the Americans into settling the outstanding issues of the treaty of 1783, they launched their abortive efforts to acquire American agreement to English mediation and their visionary barrier state project.

The defeat of St. Clair had also had a significant impact upon the relations between the Indians and the United States. The natural jubilation of the Indian nations as a result of their victory over a supposedly superior foe, the blandishments and concessions offered them by the United States as a result of that defeat, and the generous support accorded them by the British, led the tribes to develop a sense of invincibility. This in turn led them to demand the Ohio River boundary. This proved to be a fatal error for the tribes. It allowed the Administration to claim that the Indians had refused to accept a reasonable settlement. Few Americans could be found who would be willing to surrender the Northwest Territory. Thus, the government was able to proceed with plans for a renewal of war without fear of public outcry. The demand had also caused an irreparable split in the Indian federation and Indian unity would rapidly disintegrate.⁹⁴ The insistence on the

⁹⁴ Lord Dorchester to Henry Dundas, October 25,

Ohio River boundary had made war inevitable and perhaps assured the ultimate victory of Anthony Wayne at Fallen Timbers, August 20, 1794.

1793, C.O.R., p.619; Lt. Gov. J.G. Simcoe to Henry Dundas, November 10, 1793, Ibid., pp.623-624.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESPONSE OF THE NATION'S PRESS

ST. CLAIR'S DEFEAT

AND

THE RISE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The press played a major role in the lives of American citizens during the Federalist period. It served not only as the principal source of information but also played a crucial role in the shaping of public opinion. Although small and drab by contemporary standards, (each edition was but four pages in length), the newspapers were read avidly by a significant proportion of the population. Since there were no reporters in the modern sense of the word, most journals relied heavily upon contributions from their subscribers, or correspondents as they referred to them, for much of their information. Almost always these contributors signed their pieces with a pseudonym such as "Polybius" or "Braddock", thus both assuring their anonymity and frustrating future historians. Seldom did anything resembling the modern editorial appear. Editors might at times submit an opinion using a pseudonym themselves, but for the most part they relied upon the contributions

of their subscribers to reflect their own opinion. At least two additional sources of information were utilized by early American editors to fill their pages. Many stories were openly "borrowed" from other journals, apparently without fear of plagiarism charges. Further, many journals published official government information such as Congressional debates, Acts of Congress and Executive messages.¹

It was through all three of these avenues of information appearing in the nation's press, that the American people were informed of the defeat of Arthur St. Clair. Upon the receipt of the initial reports of the defeat, news from the frontier began to take precedence over all other domestic information. Virtually every edition of every paper for months afterwards carried references either to the defeat or to the crisis it had precipitated. One paper even published a special edition to keep the people abreast of the news from the West.² Most journals also

¹ Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), pp.113-162; "American Newspapers and Editorial Opinion, 1789-1793," appendix V-2 in Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington, A Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), VI, pp.393-413; Eugene Perry Link, Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800 (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1965), pp.56-60, see notes 48 and 49 on p.58; Donald H. Stewart, The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1969), pp.3-32.

² See for example: The Carlisle Gazette (Pennsylvania), April 18, 1792; The Columbian Centinel (Boston),

published in full the information released by Washington to the Congress on December 12, 1791, and Knox's report on the frontier issued in mid-January of the following year.³

Along with these official reports of the disaster, anguished pleas from desperate westerners began to appear in the press. Residents of the exposed frontiers in Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky, as well as those living north of the Ohio River were demanding immediate aid from the national government. The reader was informed that many frontier settlements might have to be abandoned, and, that the people were doing their utmost to prepare for Indian assaults expected momentarily. Rumors of a massive Indian attack about to break out all along the frontier did much to add to the agitation of people's minds over the fate of the western settlements.⁴ Unfounded reports

December 19, 1791, pp.1-3.

³A complete listing of newspapers carrying full accounts of the defeat and reprinting Washington and Knox's statements would be unnecessary. However, see for example: The Connecticut Gazette (New London), December 22, 1791, p.2; The Middlesex Gazette, December 24, 1791, pp.1-2; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), December 22, 1791, pp.2-3; Providence Gazette, December 29, 1791, p.3; Massachusetts Spy (Worcester), December 29, 1791, p.3; The Columbian Centinel (Boston), January 11, 1792, p.3; Boston Gazette, February 13, 1792, pp.1-2; Argus (Boston), February 10, 1792, p.2.

⁴There are many examples of this sentiment found in the papers during the months following St. Clair's de-

appeared claiming one outpost or another had already succumbed to withering Indian assaults.⁵ The reader first learned that frontier women were being removed to the safety of Pittsburgh, and later that Pittsburgh itself might soon have to be abandoned to marauding Indian tribes.⁶

The newspapers portrayed a nation stunned by the news of western disaster. The defeat had, ". . . cast an universal gloom over all degrees of citizens, who sincerely lament the untimely fall of so many brave officers and men." On the frontier the defeat had made "every man in Kentucky. . . thirst for revenge." In far away Boston, "The loss of the brave officers and men. . . in the western expedition, is unusually lamented in this town -- It is the theme of every conversation from the infant to the aged

feat. See for example: The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), December 24, 1791, p.2, January 7, 1792, p.3; Argus (Boston), January 24, 1792, p.2, March 9, 1792, p.3; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), January 16, 1792, p.3, January 23, 1792, p.3; Boston Gazette, March 19, 1792, p.1, April 9, 1792, p.2, May 7, 1792, p.1; Apollo (Boston), No.9 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.99.

⁵Reports such as these were common and appeared in most papers. See for example: American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), January 23, 1792, p.3; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), April 25, 1792, p.3; Boston Gazette, December 26, 1791, p.2; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), May 3, 1792, p.2.

⁶American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), January 16, 1792, p.3, January 23, 1792, p.3.

sire and matron." While in Pennsylvania it could be said that "The defeat of General St. Clair on the 4th instant, engrosses all our thoughts."⁷

The frontier situation was a depressing one, as viewed in Philadelphia's General Advertiser. "At present the Western territory, lie in a manner, desolate; and the people are left extremely disheartened." The frontier citizen was living in a state of perpetual fear -- unable to eat or sleep for fear of being attacked. "What a dreadful situation," exclaimed the General Advertiser, "a thousand times worse than that of a soldier engaged in the midst of the most severe conflict!"⁸ A recent visitor to the West told the readers of a Rhode Island newspaper of "the Contrast which was observable in the Inhabitants of this Place when I passed it, previously to the Action, and at my return to it subsequent to that Event." On his earlier visit, he had found a cheerful and friendly citizenry, but, ever since November 4, 1791, their "Aspect is now materially changed and the Marks of Despondency are everywhere visible."⁹ Unless strong measures were soon

⁷Ibid., December 26, 1792, p.3, January 2, 1792, p.3; Argus (Boston), December 16, 1791, p.3; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 30, 1792, p.3.

⁸The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 28, 1792, p.3, March 13, 1792, p.3.

⁹United States Chronicle (Providence, Rhode Island), February 16, 1792, p.3.

taken for the protection of the frontier, the Freeman's Journal of Philadelphia declared, "a general movement of the inhabitants will take place."¹⁰

So great was the volume of news from the frontier following the defeat, that a correspondent in Boston's Independent Chronicle was moved to complain that the people should be spared any further exposure to it. "The people are weary of such news," he declared; "Why cannot they [the fallen soldiers] be suffered to rest in quiet in the grave, which their country has dug for them. . . ." However, another correspondent for the same paper felt the heavy flow of western news was essential for the nation. It was important that every scrap of information be saved for posterity, he stated, for "If a faithful history of a country is desirable, and especially so eventful a period as that of the two last military campaigns in ours, surely the utility and importance of perpetuating the materials of it, must be obvious." The press, he concluded, was ". . . the most faithful Recorder, as well as the most certain means of giving to posterity, and to future historians, part of the materials of a genuine and impartial history."¹¹

¹⁰ The Freeman's Journal (Philadelphia), January 18, 1792, p.3.

¹¹ The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 26,

The history presented by the press, however, was anything but impartial. By the time of St. Clair's defeat, political parties had already begun to form in the nation. The introduction of Hamilton's financial policies, beginning in 1790, marked the beginning of a growing antagonism between those who styled themselves Federalists, on the one hand, and the Republicans on the other. Hamilton's program to establish the nation's credit on a firm footing sought to secure the support of the monied classes of the nation to the national government. The Republicans, under the leadership of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, were repelled by what they considered to be the "aristocratic" and "monarchical" tendencies of that policy.

The Hamiltonian program seemed to the Republicans to constitute an attempt to place all government power in the hands of an elite. The opponents of that program began to hammer away at the favoritism shown the creditor interests of the nation to the detriment of the vast majority of the country's citizens. The benefits expected to be reaped by the banking and financial interests of the nation as a result of Hamilton's programs insulted the Republican tendencies of Jefferson and Madison who saw their visions of an agrarian republic being swept away. The Republicans were convinced that Federalist policies,

if continued, would lead to the creation of an unlimited government -- and worse, unlimited power for the Secretary of the Treasury. Furthermore, they feared the vast agrarian-debtor interests of the nation would be placed in perpetual bondage to the creditors and financiers residing in a handful of urban centers.¹²

There were as yet, however, no formal party organizations. No nationwide organizations existed, nor were there party platforms of ideals adhered to by either side. Nonetheless, the foundation for such a formal party structure had been laid before the opening of 1792. What was needed to formulate a more coherent party structure was an issue that would bring into the open the smoldering

¹² See for example: William N. Chambers, Political Parties in a New Nation: The American Experience, 1776-1809 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963); Broadus Mitchell, Alexander Hamilton: The National Adventure, 1788-1804 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962); Dumas Malone, Jefferson and His Time, III (Boston: Little, Brown Company, 1948); Nathan Schachner, Thomas Jefferson: A Biography (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960); Edgar E. Robinson, The Evolution of American Political Parties: A Sketch of Party Development (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1924); Rudolph M. Bell, Party and Faction in American Politics: The House of Representatives, 1788-1801 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973); John S. Bassett, The Federalist System, 1789-1801 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1906); Richard Hofstadter, The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Wilfred E. Binkley, American Political Parties: Their Natural History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962) 4th ed. enlarged; Noble Cunningham, Jr., The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957).

party sentiments and resentments that lay beneath the surface of American political life. The arrival of news of St. Clair's defeat helped serve as such a catalyst.

That defeat was immediately seized upon by the Republicans as the weapon they had been waiting for to smite the almighty Hamilton and his minions. "The foes of government have seized the occasion, a lucky one for them," wrote Fisher Ames.¹³ The resultant onslaught of bitter invectives launched against the Administration in the press caught the Administration completely off guard. Perhaps, lulled into a state of overconfidence following the success of earlier Federalist policies, Ames stated, the friends of government were unprepared for the daily assaults against them in the press. "How few, how sleepy," were the Administration's supporters wrote Ames, but, "how alert its foes."¹⁴

The Republicans had a ready vehicle to begin the assault against the Federalist in Philip Freneau's National Gazette. Freneau had arrived recently in Philadelphia having been enticed there by Madison and Jefferson by an

¹³Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, January 13, 1792, in Seth Ames, ed., Works of Fisher Ames (Reprint edition, New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), pp.109-110. (Hereinafter referred to as Works of Ames.).

¹⁴Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, January 23, 1792, Ibid., pp.110-111.

offer of a translator's job in the State Department.¹⁵

Alarmed at the influence of the Federalist Gazette of the United States, edited by John Fenno, the Republican leaders had worked hard to convince Freneau to open shop in the nation's capital. Nor were these papers the only partisan ones in the country. While many journals maintained a neutral stand during the debates which would now ensue, many others ably championed their chosen causes. On the Republican side Benjamin Bache's General Advertiser (Philadelphia), Benjamin Edes' Boston Gazette, and Thomas Adams' Independent Chronicle (Boston) were especially effective. While papers such as Benjamin Russell's Columbian Centinel (Boston), Isaiah Thomas' Massachusetts Spy (Worcester), and William Goddard's Maryland Journal (Baltimore) espoused the Federalist cause.¹⁶

¹⁵Freneau had been a classmate of Madison's at Princeton. Anxious to start a paper with national circulation, to counteract the effect of Fenno's Gazette of the United States, Jefferson and Madison put considerable pressure on Freneau to undertake the task. To make the move to Philadelphia more attractive, Freneau was offered the clerkship for foreign languages in the State Department. At length, he agreed to accept the offer and the first edition of his National Gazette appeared on October 31, 1791. See Mott, American Journalism, pp.123-127; Stewart, The Opposition Press, pp.8-9; Schachner, Thomas Jefferson, pp.432-446.

¹⁶See Stewart, The Opposition Press.

Secretary of War, Henry Knox, was certainly the most vulnerable member of the Administration. It was his department that was directly responsible for conducting the campaign against the Indians. In addition, Knox was a fit object of Republican scorn since he was not only a "Furious Federalist"¹⁷ who consistently supported Hamilton's policies, but his life style, devoted to parties and fancy dress, embodied the "monarchical tendencies" so repugnant to Republican thinking.¹⁸

It was Knox, therefore, who bore the brunt of anti-Administration criticism. The people must be satisfied concerning the value of the war, and if they were not then "the minister should atone for the contempt, by a loss of consequence, loss of office, nay a forfeiture, of more consequence to him perhaps than both." The cause behind the war, could be "an ill-timed desire to dazzle the world by the brilliancy of the war department." The report made by Knox was unconvincing. It was alleged to be an attempt

¹⁷Quoted in Leonard D. White, The Federalists: A Study in Administrative History (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p.152.

¹⁸North Callahan, Henry Knox: General Washington's General (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1958), p.284; James Thomas Flexner, George Washington and the New Nation (1783-1793), (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), III, pp.308-324.

"to justify his hostilities upon the Indian Tribes."¹⁹

It was due to his neglect that the battle was lost. His management must be considered "the primary cause" of the defeat. The result of that mismanagement was the continuation of a war that was considered "by THE PEOPLE in general as cruel, unjust and impolitic," declared a subscriber in the Independent Chronicle: "If the war must be carried on, THE PEOPLE have a right to look for a change in the department."²⁰

The cost of the war was alleged to be for the Secretary's own benefit, but the nation was not in a position to "support the sumptuous entertainments of my Lord K____."²¹ A correspondent signing himself "Braddock", a nom de plume which carried obvious implications, declared that the war's expense was for private gain. Money was being spent "merely to gratify the pride of a few ambitious overgrown individuals; and to enable them to live in all the

¹⁹The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 7, 1792, p.2. Also see American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), April 16, 1792, p.3; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), June 7, 1792, p.2; March 15, 1792, p.2; Massachusetts Spy (Worcester), February 23, 1792, p.3.

²⁰The Independent Chronicle (Boston), June 7, 1792, p.2.

²¹Boston Gazette, May 7, 1792, p.3.

grandeur, pomp, and parade of Nabobs."²² The Argus, a Republican Boston newspaper, made a most bitter attack upon Knox when it printed the following:

The BOOXBINDER* (or Great-Man-would-be) is not a little becalked here, and in the eyes of the discerning, falls lower and lower /most humiliating TRUTH!!/ every day, even CAESAR'S countenance cannot support him. General ARTHUR too, has got himself in troubled waters, and richly deserves it, for paying Scotch court (as he hath of late done) to the balloon, or bag of windy pomposity, whon, in his heart, he must despise for his fulsome palaver, and total want of both honor and sincerity.

*[a term of reproach applied to the inimitable Secretary of War, the hon. General KNOX! -- O, thou rogutsh, wicked Paragraphist! what Mercy canst thou expect from HIS terrible THUNDERERS!! 7 23

Hugh Henry Brackenridge, a resident of Pittsburgh and an influential leader of frontier opinion, sarcastically derided the Secretary as obviously being a "great general". During peace time his talents were hidden, he declared, but the Indian War had allowed his true genius to emerge. "The sacrifice of two armies, in order to lull the Savages into such perfect security as to render them an easy conquest," showed a foresight that could not be matched in military history. Certainly it would be difficult for him "to vin-

²²American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), December 26, 1791, p.3. See also, Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 2, 1792, p.1; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), May 3, 1792, p.3.

²³Argus (Boston), April 27, 1792, p.3.

dedicate the role of conducting it, from the charge of incapacity or mismanagement." Not only had he permitted soldiers to march into battle who were "ill paid, ill clothed, undisciplined, discontented," but he had permitted them to be led by "a General disabled by Gout!!"²⁴

The methods Knox had used to carry on the Indian War were severely censured by the opponents of the Administration's policies. The army allegedly was sent into the wilderness not in secret but after their missions had been well publicized in the press for a year in advance. Little wonder then that they did not achieve the element of surprise. Indians were allegedly given time to gather all the way from Lake Superior to stop the American Army. To make matters worse, it was argued, the army dragged heavy cannon with it which were, not only useless against the savages, but slowed down the march considerably. Would it not be far better to use a militia composed of well trained and experienced woodsmen instead of an army composed of undertrained and inexperienced men such as St. Clair had with him? Certainly a militia, especially a mounted militia, could make effective surprise raids upon

²⁴American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), March 12, 1792, pp.1-2.

the Indian villages and accomplish far more than large standing armies.²⁵

A more elaborate plan for frontier defense was offered by a correspondent signing himself "A.Z." He felt the wisest tactic was to model our frontier defense on that followed by the Romans in the face of barbarian invasion. Expert woodsmen would be hired by the government to protect the frontier and they would be paid in land located near frontier settlements. Each settlement would then have a ready-made militia living in the neighborhood to fend off possible Indian attacks.²⁶ A similar sentiment was offered by a frontier resident: "If our troops must either retreat to our settlements, or fall a sacrifice to the mistaken policy of government, I call it mistaken policy to establish posts in the enemies country, without planting settlements in their neighborhood." We must, he said, give inducements to our settlers, such as offers of land. In this way every frontiersmen would become "a sentinel on constant duty."²⁷

²⁵The Independent Chronicle (Boston), February 9, 1792, p.1; Argus (Boston), January 27, 1792, p.2, January 17, 1792, p.3; Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia), February 1, 1792, p.2. See also Chapter II above.

²⁶The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), February 1, 1792, p.3.

²⁷Boston Gazette, December 26, 1791, p.2; Argus

Still others criticized the government for not calling for an even larger army than it did. We need a strong military immediately, wrote one correspondent.

"The government deceives itself if it thinks an insignificant and undisciplined army can beat these Indians."

We should draft an additional fifteen thousand men wrote another.²⁸ But the most ambitious plan came from the pen of Brackenridge. He wanted the government to build a strong outpost on Lake Erie at Presque Isle. From here the troops could be put aboard ships and sent to the Maumee to attack the Indian confederacy at its heart. "Presq' Isle, Presq' Isle, is the object, and ought to be seized immediately. . . ." ²⁹ Since "the best defence is offence," he concluded, sitting back in isolated forts with a militia to defend them was an erroneous policy. The nation must attack and must do so with a large force. Brackenridge was also impatient with the Administration for consistently

(Boston), January 17, 1792, p.3.

²⁸ Argus (Boston), January 17, 1792, p.2, March 9, 1792, p.2. See also Brunswick Gazette (New Brunswick, New Jersey), January 17, 1792, p.3; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), February 3, 1792, p.2.

²⁹ National Gazette (Philadelphia), February 4, 1792, p.1. This actually coincided with Jefferson's own thinking. See Franklin B. Sawvel, ed., The Anas of Jefferson (Reprint edition, New York: De Capo Press, 1970), p.60. (Hereinafter referred to as Anas.).

trying to negotiate peace on one hand and waging war on the other. Certainly, he wrote, the nation could not continue to follow a policy "of half peace, half war from which nothing could result but half success."³⁰

A secondary issue in the newspaper debate over the defeat of St. Clair, and one which developed into further criticism of Knox, arose in conjunction with a statement made by St. Clair shortly after the battle. In a postscript to a report he made to Secretary Knox, St. Clair referred to an incident that occurred the evening before the battle. That night, Captain Jacob Slough had been ordered to make a reconnaissance of the area around the camp. He did so and found a heavy concentration of Indians. Returning to camp, Slough reported his findings to General Richard Butler. St. Clair claimed that Butler never informed him of Slough's discovery. Butler was killed the day of the battle and it would seem that would be the end of the story.³¹

St. Clair's letter was published in the press, however, and that publication led one of the late General's

³⁰The Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), March 21, 1792, pp.1-2; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), March 12, 1792, pp.1-2.

³¹For the letter and postscript in question see: St. Clair to Knox, November 9, 1791, William Henry Smith, ed., The St. Clair Papers (Reprint edition, Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), II, pp.262-267.

aides, John Morgan, to complain to the Secretary of War of the inaccuracy of St. Clair's statement. Slough was not ordered to reconnoiter by Butler, claimed Morgan, but rather by St. Clair himself. Butler not only never knew of Slough's report but was completely unaware of his mission. According to Morgan's account, St. Clair was simply using the good name of Butler in order to exonerate himself of charges of negligence in allowing his army to be surprised the day of battle.

This debate reached the public when Butler's widow prevailed upon Morgan to publish his correspondence with Knox in order to clear her husband's name. St. Clair was furious. He immediately ordered Morgan arrested on charges of mutiny. Shortly thereafter, Knox ordered Morgan to Fort Washington on the frontier to stand trial. The problem soon became enveloped in a vigorous newspaper debate.³²

The evidence indicated that, for whatever reasons, Morgan was lying.³³ Affidavits presented by supporters of

³²The Morgan story was published and commented upon in several papers. See for example: Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), April 25, 1792, May 2, 1792, May 16, 1792, May 23, 1792; The Freeman's Journal (Philadelphia), January 25, 1792, pp.2-3; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), February 6, 1792, p.3.

³³See for example: Extracts from testimony of Captain Denny, Smith, St. Clair Papers, II, pp.633-637; Slough's testimony before the Congressional Committee is in Ibid., pp.633-635.

St. Clair and the evidence brought out in the Congressional committee hearing made this clear. Nonetheless, Morgan's arrest and later trial appeared to some Republican partisans as a bold move on the part of the Federalists to find a scapegoat for their failures in the Indian War. Morgan himself even felt that it was an attempt to prevent him from testifying before the Congressional committee investigating the defeat.

Why was Morgan being sent nine hundred miles to the frontier for trial, demanded one correspondent? When the British threatened to take Hancock and Adams to England for trial it caused great concern among the people. The people know their rights, he argued, and "we are no more willing to part with them to Lord Knox than to Lord North."³⁴ It was bad enough to squander away the nation's money for the benefit of the War Department wrote another correspondent, "without the additional violation of the rights of citizens, in dragging a man hundreds of miles for trial for supposed crimes." The defeat was clearly St. Clair's fault, wrote another, and if that were honestly admitted then "no imputation against General Butler will be necessary." Further, added another writer, "the Conduct of G____l St. C____r, & the S____y at W_r will

³⁴Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), June 13, 1792, pp.1-2.

by no means bear the scrutiny of an impartial public."³⁵

To those defending Morgan the reasons behind the failure of the American Army were clear. St. Clair was an inept leader who took orders from an equally inept, if not corrupt, superior, Henry Knox. Once the defeat took place those two conspired to place the blame upon a fallen hero, Richard Butler.

The blistering attacks upon the Secretary of War account for his dissatisfaction with the Congressional investigating committee's report. The barrage of adverse publicity in the newspapers led to his insistence that the investigation be reopened so that he could lay to rest the accusations against him. Knox himself, however, was not particularly sensitive to public criticism, and in general, he did not appear to have been greatly disturbed by these attacks. Nor is there any evidence to indicate that it in any way threatened his position in the cabinet.³⁶ The fact was that he was not the primary target of the Republicans.

The vicious assault on Knox appears in large measure to have been a carry over from the animosities felt by the Republicans toward Hamilton. Here, the role of St. Clair's defeat as a catalyst to party development may

³⁵Apollo (Boston), April 20, 1792, pp.177-179.

³⁶Callahan, Henry Knox, pp.288, 317.

be seen. Jefferson, for example, though never opposed to the war itself, had consistently hoped the effects of the defeat would serve as an avenue toward weakening the powers of the Secretary of the Treasury. He was fully behind Madison's attempts to prevent Hamilton from being allowed to report the plan to the House over the funding of the Frontier Bill. Although that effort failed, he believed it had "deeply wounded" Hamilton and that "on the whole, it showed that Treasury influence was tottering."³⁷ Then again, when the committee appointed to investigate St. Clair's defeat requested executive papers, the Secretary of the Treasury urged the President to retain the right to refuse to release certain documents if not in the public interest. Jefferson felt that this was due to Hamilton's fear that Congress might someday investigate his office.³⁸

It was not surprising then that Jefferson took the assaults on Knox, whom he considered to be a nonentity, to be unimportant. Republican attacks on Knox, according to Jefferson, were in reality aimed at Hamilton. The discontent with the War Department, he stated, was really just an overflow "from their real channel, which would never have taken place, if they had not first been gener-

³⁷Anas, p.57.

³⁸Ibid., p.70.

ated in another department, to wit, that of the Treasury."³⁹

It was not surprising, therefore that Hamilton did not emerge unscathed from the controversy surrounding St. Clair's defeat. His opponents immediately tied the defeat to the financial policies they so greatly detested. Freneau's National Gazette in explaining party differences published that the Federalists "have considered speculation as the very soul of public credit" while to the Republicans it was viewed "as the pampered child of an unruly avarice, and the prolific parent of idleness, dissipation and fraud." Furthermore, the public debt was viewed by the Federalists as "an instrument for heaping vast wealth in the hands of a few." While, for the Republicans, the debt was "as unjust and unrepublican, and as injurious to all the best interests of the country."⁴⁰ And, it was by connecting Republican opposition to speculation and the public debt that Hamilton was assailed.

Speculators were especially obnoxious to the Republicans. It was they who profited from the funding-assumption plan and from the establishment of the Bank of the United States. The Bank in particular set off an

³⁹Ibid., pp.54-55. Also see Schachner, Thomas Jefferson, p.439.

⁴⁰National Gazette (Philadelphia), April 30, 1792, p.1.

orgy of speculation that forced stock prices exorbitantly high. By March, 1792, the price of government securities and bank stock soared to untenable heights. Collapse was inevitable and occurred at the beginning of March when the notorious speculator and former Treasury Department employee, William Duer, was forced to suspend payments. That action served to provoke America's first financial panic.⁴¹

The war was alleged to be another excuse to enrich these "parasites" at the public expense. "What can be the policy of prosecuting this cruel war," asked a subscriber; "Is it to punish the Indians. . .or to promote the interests of jobbers and speculators in the western lands?" Do not let "the interests of speculators for lands or for offices," lead the nation into war, cried a correspondent in the Boston Gazette. The prosecution of the Indian War rewarded only those who made contracts for millions of acres of land wrote another. The war must stop since it was "calculated for land jobbers merely," who themselves were "the

⁴¹Flexner, George Washington, p.322; Stewart, The Opposition Press, pp.33-70; Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, John Beckley: Zealous Partisan in a Nation Divided (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973), p.64; Mitchell, Alexander Hamilton, pp.154-167; Claude Bowers, Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy in America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1925), pp.176-178. Also see Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, January 23, 1792, Works of Ames, I, pp.110-111; Augusta Chronicle (Georgia), May 26, 1792, p.1; Pennsylvania Journal

offspring of fraud, treachery, and unsatiabable avarice." It was a short step for those who blamed Hamilton for creating those speculators, to blame him as well for "the machinations of unprincipled land-jobbers," in the West.⁴²

William Duer had had a long history of speculation in lands and government securities and his failure gave special satisfaction to the Republicans.⁴³ The involvement of Duer, and his known connections with Hamilton, placed the blame for the defeat closer to Hamilton's door. Duer had been authorized by Hamilton to supply the army, and the opportunity for such a man to profit at the public expense was obvious to Administration opponents. The raising of an army opened a wide field for speculation, wrote one correspondent. Money was to be made by supplying the army with the cheapest possible goods while charging inflated prices. That was allegedly what happened to St. Clair's army. This writer declared that on Novem-

(Philadelphia), January 25, 1792, p.3, April 25, 1792, p.3.

⁴²Boston Gazette, November 28, 1791, p.1, January 2, 1792, p.2, April 30, 1792, pp.1-2; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), March 3, 1792, p.1; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), February 9, 1792, p.1.

⁴³See for example: Mitchell, Alexander Hamilton, pp.154-167; Joseph Stancliffe Davis, Essays in the Earlier History of American Corporations (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), I.

ber 3, 1791, St. Clair's men were "benun'd with cold, and weak, by living on a scanty pittance." In such a situation, the army lost its ambition and morale. It was little wonder that they were defeated, while the contractors reaped huge profits. The contractors should be punished by losing not only their property, but their lives for such malfeasance. They would then have made "some small atonement, for the irretrievable loss sustained on the 4th of last November."⁴⁴

In addition, it was alleged that the war was an attempt to further Hamilton's policy of maintaining the national debt, and to assure the payment of the government creditors. After all, wrote one correspondent, "some think a standing army is the best security for punctual payment of Interest on six per cent stock."⁴⁵ The cry to maintain a standing army in order to provide for frontier defense was declared to be another excuse to maintain a national debt. Government needs the army, wrote "M", but to maintain an army it needed a war. And, the Indian War had proved to be most convenient since it could be stopped or started at will. Such a war, he continued, would not derange the financial structure of the nation. Therefore,

⁴⁴ Boston Gazette, March 19, 1792, p.2; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), February 27, 1792, pp.2-3.

⁴⁵ Boston Gazette, January 2, 1792, p.2.

creditors need not be concerned in the least "of not receiving their six and three percents quarterly." The war was essential to the government rather than take the chance "to extinguish the national debt, as to lose this glorious bond of union, this cement of society."⁴⁶ When word arrived that a draft was to take place to rebuild the army following St. Clair's defeat, "A Looker On," writing in the Boston Gazette stated:

It had such an Effect, that upwards of Three Hundred Brokers of the third order left this Town -- Those Men are generally known in this and some other Towns, by the Name of Paper-Hunters, or Hamilton's Rangers -- Within these few days many have returned, having been assured that Congress will not suffer the original public creditors to be injured -- But, If Creatures must be had, the above, with a few of the higher order, are all that Boston can be willing to send to moisten the Western Soil; even then, 'tis doubtful if the Land would be enriched -- One Thing is certain, the Public will not be impoverished.⁴⁷

The Republicans would be disappointed in that they were unable to find Hamilton legally culpable for any crimes or malfeasance in office. That they failed, however, was not for want of trying. Nor was the newspaper assault on Hamilton completely unrewarding for them. It certainly gave them an opportunity to publicly excoriate the Secretary of the Treasury and to heap further condemnation

⁴⁶Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia), February 1, 1792, p.2.

⁴⁷Boston Gazette, December 26, 1791, p.3.

upon his policies. The newspaper attacks on the Secretary, in the wake of St. Clair's defeat, were a prelude to the all-out attacks on treasury policies appearing in the press during the summer of 1792.

Not only were these individual attacks made by the Republicans, but the Administration in general received strong remonstrances. This occurred in spite of the candor of the government in immediately releasing to the public not only all details of the defeat, but a lengthy history of American-Indian relations leading to St. Clair's expedition. But, if the Administration hoped that this would satisfy or disarm its critics, it was sorely mistaken.

The charge was immediately leveled that the people had been kept ignorant of the reasons behind the Indian War. The people demanded to know the real reasons behind the growing conflict, stated Bache's General Advertiser. In a country where the press is free,

in such a country, should important concerns remain for a long time enveloped in darkness, should wars be fomented and carried on, repeated defeats take place, new levies raised, supplies granted from time to time, and the people remain ignorant of the original cause or the ultimate end aimed at, it would almost appear a phenomenon in nature: yet such a case exists.⁴⁸

The nation must be told, wrote a correspondent, why our policies have failed so miserably and why such a

⁴⁸The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 13, 1792, p.2.

war is necessary. They must be told that "the arms of the Union have suffered a stamp of dishonor, disgraceful beyond comparison. . . ." The nation was following a policy of disgraceful conduct towards the Indians without the people knowing its cause. "Americans! -- it is the right of freemen to be informed and satisfied. Is this your case? More than half a million of dollars have been expended, two armies slaughtered, national glory prostrated -- For what? Does any citizen know why?"⁴⁹ A correspondent writing for Adams' Independent Chronicle, and signing himself "Braddock" echoed similar sentiments. The people were told to mourn the fallen soldiers, he stated, yet "scarcely an individual knows the PRINCIPLES of the war."⁵⁰

Who would benefit from such a conflict? Why were we carrying "fire and sword into the Indian country?" Why did not the Administration come out into the open and fully give the reasons for the war?⁵¹ Such questions re-

⁴⁹Ibid., January 7, 1792, p.2.

⁵⁰The Independent Chronicle (Boston), December 22, 1791, p.3; December 29, 1791, p.3; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), January 9, 1792, p.2; Argus (Boston), January 10, 1792, p.3; Boston Gazette, January 16, 1792, p.2; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), March 10, 1792, p.3.

⁵¹See for example: Boston Gazette, January 9, 1792, p.2; The Maryland Journal (Baltimore), January 14, 1792, p.2; Argus (Boston), February 7, 1792, p.2.

peatedly appeared in the press. The answers suggested were disquieting to the Administration.

Knox's report to the nation on the causes of the Indian War was said to be a mere cover-up attempting to shield those responsible from their proper punishment. The report was an attempt "to divert the attention of incensed freemen from being fixed upon those who have deservedly incurred it." Writing in Bache's General Advertiser, "An Observer" informed Philadelphia readers that perhaps the Administration, rather than attempting to subdue the Indians, had as its real motive a desire to secure a stronger control over the frontier citizens. Perhaps the real plan was to establish an arbitrary government over the West. Worse, perhaps it was part of a scheme to increase the importance of the War Department.⁵² After all, inquired a contributor to the American Mercury, "Who will gain most wealth -- most power -- and most consequence -- by the present Indian war? -- I answer -- Our Rulers. Who will lose most blood -- most money and most honor -- by it? I answer, THE PEOPLE."⁵³

The defeat of St. Clair and the subsequent assaults

⁵²The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 7, 1792, p.2, February 20, 1792, pp.2-3.

⁵³American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), February 13, 1792, p.2.

on the Administration stunned the President. At the height of the press debate over the causes of the defeat he noted that while the government had started out with the good will of the people on its side, the "symptoms of dissatisfaction" then appearing, were "far beyond what he could have expected."⁵⁴ Washington fully realized that the press attacks upon Administration policies were attacks upon himself. Clearly, by "condemning the administration of the government, they condemned him, for if there were measures pursued contrary to his sentiments, they must conceive him too careless to attend them, or too stupid to understand them."⁵⁵ Washington considered the press attacks aimed directly at himself, and rightfully so. Although his name was never openly criticized, he would indeed be "stupid" not to realize that attacks on his policies, and the men he appointed to formulate and carry them out, were attacks on him personally. St. Clair's defeat, therefore, had led to open assaults upon the wisdom of Washington as President. Even though praise of him still appeared in the journals, "he must be a fool indeed to swallow the little sugar plums here and there thrown out to him," and ignore the attacks being

⁵⁴Anas, p.54.

⁵⁵Ibid., p.84.

made upon him.⁵⁶

The President, by the spring of 1792, had decided that he would not seek a second term.⁵⁷ His determination to quit office was a real one and members of his cabinet, when informed of his intentions, did their best to convince him to stay in office. Jefferson, who, much to the consternation of the President, had determined not to serve in a second term, nevertheless made a concerted effort to convince the President that it was his duty to run again. However, he was not willing to attempt to ease the pressures on the President. In outlining his reasons for desiring to retire from office Washington had dwelled on the opposition in the press as constituting a condemnation of his Administration, and cited it as a possible indication that he should not seek office again. Washington knew that the editor of the National Gazette was employed by Jefferson's Department and he specifically singled out Freneau's paper as a cause of his grief. If, however, this was meant as a subtle request to Jefferson to tone down the outpouring from his employee's press, it went unheeded. Jefferson, though desirous that Washington stay in office, was apparently not sufficiently

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ See for example: Flexner, George Washington, III, pp.359-367; Freeman, George Washington, VI, pp.355-384.

motivated to lessen the burden on his chief's shoulders by using his influence with Freneau. He rather insensitively ignored the implications of the President's statements and, changing the topic, began to condemn Hamilton's policies.⁵⁸ While the President would ultimately determine to run again, the newspaper debate arising from St. Clair's defeat can be said to have been a contributing factor to Washington's earlier determination to quit office after one term.

The Administration had clearly been caught napping by the Republican newspaper assault. But this did not mean that the government was forced to stand alone. In the face of anti-Administration sentiment which filled the press, the supporters of the government quickly began to rally their forces.

However, the source of the multiple attacks on the Administration were difficult for pro-Administration correspondents to pin down. A correspondent signing himself "Americanus" asked, where were all the critics of the government's Indian policies before St. Clair was defeated? Why did they not complain for the previous two years? Surely the government's western policies had not been a secret. If those critics felt the war to be unjust, it was criminal of them to sit back and not cry out against

⁵⁸Anas, p.84.

it. Both the expedition and its plans were well publicized before hand, yet there was no chorus of complaints raised against the war at that time.⁵⁹

The writings of the critics of the war were alleged to be the work of chronic complainers. They were said to be the efforts of those who simply desired to excite the people against the Administration. "A Friend to Government" wrote that if it was somehow good to be deceived, then the writers against the war deserved to be rewarded. Those were the ones who "would be sorry to find the truth on the side of government, or its officers." If St. Clair had won, those same voices would have been raised loudly in support of the operation. Those who complained did so only "to satisfy their splenetic [*sic*] disposition, and to spread a spirit of dissatisfaction thro' the body of humanity." The honest citizen must be taught the true facts behind the Indian War and speak out against "those who take pleasure in sowing the seeds of distrust and disunion among the people."⁶⁰

Criticism of the government was in itself good,

⁵⁹American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), March 12, 1792, p.2; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 10, 1792, p.3.

⁶⁰The Independent Chronicle (Boston), February 9, 1792, p.1; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 10, 1792, p.3; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), February 4, 1792, p.3.

wrote another correspondent. But, those who were speaking out against the Indian War were doing so without knowledge of the topic. People were praising the Indians and criticizing the government as though there were some specific merit in turning the people against its leaders.⁶¹ Those who sided with the Indians seemed to take pleasure in the army's defeat. They betrayed only their own ignorance in so doing. "I sincerely hope those gentlemen will cease to deprecate the 'Powers that be!; -- and will be willing to allow that they know as well, at least, as those knowing ones, who are three hundred miles from the scene of action."⁶²

"A Citizen" angered over the open attacks on government leaders complained that Administration opponents would have the people turn against the Secretary of War or even the President. But, it was not possible for him to sit silently by and let those people throw such indignities at the executive branch of government. "Thou bold disturber of the tranquil minds of my fellow Citizens," he declared, "Why have you not at once impeached the Representatives of the nation and the President. The first for having dealt out with too sparing a hand, the monies

⁶¹The Independent Chronicle (Boston), February 9, 1792, p.1.

⁶²Argus (Boston), January 17, 1792, p.2.

of their constituents; and then the President for having made it go farther than any other nation would have done twice the sum." Finally, to those stirring up anti-government sentiment, he demanded, "Insult us no more!!! unless you mean to declare yourself the incendiary of a party, that would lessen the confidence in (and invalidate) the wisdom of government, and likewise leave the extent of our whole frontiers open to relentless monsters."⁶³

The most able defense of the Administration and one which most clearly summarized the position of the pro-war writers was John Fenno's in his Gazette of the United States. "The people have seldom cause to fear that accusers of their government will be wanting," he began. But the people should deal out their criticisms in a sparing manner, for all the facts were not yet in. The problem, as he saw it, was that people tended to march to whatever tune was being played at the time. If that tune was replete with anti-government vituperation, then many would follow it. When the new government under the Constitution began, he reflected, these critics of today came forward full of praise and enthusiasm for the new Constitution. But then, after a time, that tune changed

⁶³Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 10, 1792, p.2.

and suddenly these same people were complaining that they could not live under such a document without amendments. If they did not have those amendments the government was nothing but a tyranny. Then, after the first Congress, they complained that the public debt would never be paid since all the public monies were going into the payment of those salaries. "The grass will not grow -- the ships will not sail -- the tide will not rise, because of high salaries."

Next, in Fenno's defense of Administration's policies, came the second session of the First Congress, and a new set of grievances. "Why does Congress hear Quaker petitions, and neglect providing for the public debt? -- why is it not funded?" The public creditors were said to be starving. But then the debt was indeed funded and once more the complaints changed. Now, Congress had cut off the just demands of the creditors. Furthermore, when that argument had run its course new complaints arose. Now it was said that Congress had provided too well for the creditors. "The public creditors are living in luxury -- such a flood of wealth will drown us. . . We might have gone on without funding the debt -- we might have paid the debt faster -- we might have paid it without paying."

Fenno also stated that the news of the Indian

War and the complaints against it seemed to have beaten all other sources of complaint "as soundly as it has beaten the brave St. Clair and his army." The people read about "Nothing but the Indian War." "How cruel to kill the Indians. -- how foolish to send regular armies which will not kill them. Poor humanity is ready to die of grief, because you take their lands -- you seek their lives, and advises to send volunteers to kill them all." "I find," he concluded, "by reading the papers, that Congress is always in the wrong." It was as wrong if it acted on a matter, he declared, as it was if it did not act. And, if the advice of those who complained was listened to, he stated, then they turned right around and complained again that the advice was ever taken. It was only a few men who made such complaints, he concluded, "and seize every opportunity, especially public disasters, to make the people hate the government as bitterly as they do themselves."⁶⁴

The Administration apologists were unable to focus on personalities as did the anti-Administration forces. Nothing comparable to the partisan attacks on Knox or Hamilton are found in the Federalist press. Rather, they were forced to condemn those who opposed the war in

⁶⁴ Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), February 11, 1792, p.3.

vague terms as people who detested all public measures. Nevertheless, the defeat of St. Clair had generated a considerable volume of partisan argumentation in the press. It served in effect as a starting point for the serious party warfare that would increasingly reflect itself in the press beginning in 1792. While it would be overstating the case to agree with Fisher Ames' observation that there existed at this time "a regular, well-disciplined opposition party,"⁶⁵ it is not unreasonable to suggest that the debates engendered by St. Clair's defeat were a significant contributory factor in the rise of the nation's first political parties.

⁶⁵Fisher Ames to George Richards Minot, May 3, 1792, Works of Ames, I, pp.118-119.

CHAPTER V

THE RESPONSE OF THE NATION'S PRESS

ST. CLAIR'S DEFEAT

AND

THE ADMINISTRATION'S INDIAN POLICY

While the Indian War had never been a popular one in America, strong opposition to it did not appear until after the defeat of General Arthur St. Clair. The defeat of his army provoked a lengthy and significant discussion of the wisdom of the Administration's Indian policies. The nature of the Indian title to the land, the extent of Indian rights and the morality of the American position toward the Indian was debated in the press at length in the months following the defeat.

A basic inquiry made by those who began to question Administration policies was whether or not the war could have been avoided if the United States had attended more seriously to the task of negotiating a peace with the tribes of the Northwest? The Administration had contended that the war on the frontier had erupted due to the refusal of the Indian tribes to accept the peaceful overtures of the United States. This contention was seriously

opened to question following the defeat of St. Clair.

Letters appearing in the press inquired whether the government had been sincere in its attempts to achieve a peaceful settlement. "Have proper persons or proper measures been employed to make peace with the Indians?" asked one correspondent.¹ Perhaps the government was merely attempting to show its power by attacking the tribes wrote another.² Certainly, peace was the wisest course to have been followed, it was argued. One simply had to look at the examples of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts in the colonial days to be convinced of this truth. Massachusetts had chosen the road of war and was continuously harassed by the tribes. It was once feared that the entire settlement might be destroyed. On the other hand Pennsylvania chose the road of peace and treated with the Indians in a just and honest fashion. The result was that they were enabled to live with them peacefully.³

¹American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), February 13, 1792, p.2; Maryland Journal (Baltimore), January 31, 1792, p.2.

²The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 7, 1792, p.2; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 26, 1792, p.1.

³Boston Gazette, April 16, 1792, p.2, January 16, 1792, p.2; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), February 16, 1792, pp.1-2; The Freeman's Journal (Philadelphia), January 25, 1792, p.3.

The Administration was accused of following the example of Massachusetts. For, rather than truly attempting to negotiate a peace, it had tried to dictate to the tribes on grounds that they could not possibly accept without relinquishing all their rights to the land. The United States, it was alleged, insisted on the exclusive right to the soil, and denied any such right on the part of the Indians. If the Indians negotiated on this basis they would be deprived of all their rights. Naturally under the circumstances, the tribes refused to negotiate with the Americans except at the point of a gun.⁴

Defenders of the Administration's policy, led by John Fenno's Gazette of the United States, were quick to respond to this charge. Following the lead provided by the Administration in its public statements on Indian policy, they contended that the Indians had refused all reasonable offers made by the United States.⁵ Therefore,

⁴Apollo (Boston), No.7 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.65-67.

⁵There are many examples of this sentiment. See for example: The Federal Gazette (Philadelphia), February 9, 1792, pp.2-3; Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 10, 1792, p.2; Salem Gazette (Massachusetts), January 31, 1792, p.2; Providence Gazette (Rhode Island), January 21, 1792, p.2; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), February 9, 1792, p.1; Argus (Boston), January 3, 1792, p.2, January 17, 1792, p.2; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), March 12, 1792, p.2; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), December 31, 1791, p.3, January 11, 1792, p.1, February 8, 1792, p.3; Brunswick Gazette (New Brunswick, New Jersey), January 17, 1792, p.3.

"Whatever may be the consequences of the Indian war, the United States are not to blame for them," stated the Gazette of the United States, and this theme was soon picked up by other Administration-oriented newspapers.⁶

The Indians were said to have consistently refused to respond to America's pacific overtures, since they were motivated "by a thirst for blood and plunder, with both of which they have been too abundantly gratified." "Justice is on the side of the United States," wrote another correspondent, since peace had been its only objective. "The desire to establish permanent and honorable peace between the United States and all the tribes of Indians, has been zealously exhibited both by the former and present government."⁷ Time and again the Administration had made overtures to the Indians only to have them refuse to negotiate. The government of the United States had even gone so far as to order a truce on the frontier to show its peaceful intentions, but Indian depredations against innocent American families had continued. If the people were aware of the lengths to which the government had gone to secure a just peace, concluded one correspondent, they would be convinced

⁶Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), December 31, 1791, p.3. See also Virginia Herald and Frederick'sberg Advertiser, January 12, 1792, p.2.

⁷Gazette of the United States, December 31, 1791, p.3, January 11, 1792, p.1, February 8, 1792, p.3.

of the justice of the American cause.⁸

The truth lay somewhere between these arguments. The United States had been attempting to avoid an Indian war since 1775. Just one week after declaring independence from Great Britain, the Continental Congress passed an act dividing the Indian country into three districts and authorizing the appointment of commissioners who were to secure the peace and friendship of the tribes. Attempts to achieve both peace and friendship of the Indians were consistently made during the Confederation period and these efforts led to the negotiation of several treaties. Then when the new federal government was created, Washington's Administration continued to search for a peaceful settlement of differences and turned to military expeditions only when those efforts had failed.⁹

⁸ American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), March 12, 1792, p.2; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), December 31, 1791, p.3, January 11, 1792, p.1. Also see: The Federal Gazette (Philadelphia), February 9, 1792, pp.2-3; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.3, February 8, 1792, p.3; Argus (Boston), January 17, 1792, p.2.

⁹ The story of American-Indian relations prior to St. Clair's defeat may be followed in: George Dewey Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs: Political, Economic, and Diplomatic, 1789-1850 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941); Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962); Reginald Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812 (Michigan State University Press, 1967); Horsman, "American Indian Policy in the

Proponents of the Administration's policies were correct, therefore, since efforts had been undertaken consistently by the government to achieve a negotiated peace with the tribes of the Northwest. Further, these efforts to achieve a peace were sincere. Nevertheless, the fact remained that all attempts had failed.

The trouble rested with an apparent premise of the American position. Namely, that the Indian must be willing to part with his lands for a fair price. American policy did not allow for a refusal on the part of the Indians to sell their territory to the United States. Once that refusal was registered by the tribes the Administration turned to coercion as a weapon to convince the Indians to sell. The dissatisfaction felt by the tribes over their treatment in the treaties of Fort Stanwix, McIntosh and Harmar during the Confederation period, led them to repudiate those agreements and to refuse to deal further with the United States. When Washington took office, the Indians, more accustomed to American dictation of terms rather than negotiation, were in no mood to accept more

Old Northwest," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., XVIII (January, 1961), pp.35-53; Walter H. Mohr, Federal Indian Relations, 1774-1788 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933); S. Lyman Tyler, A History of Indian Policy (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1973).

of the same. While these refusals might be deemed Indian intransigence by the Administration, perhaps its opponents were closer to the mark when they stated that the Indians simply were refusing to negotiate at the point of a gun.¹⁰

The fundamental question was did the Indians have the right to refuse to negotiate with the United States? The answer was to be found in the nature of the Indian title to the land. Proponents of the Administration's policies argued that the Indians did not have the right to refuse sincere American efforts to secure their lands, since the tribes did not possess the title to them.¹¹ That title, so the argument went, had been forfeited in several instances. First, the Treaty of Paris was said

¹⁰ See above note. For further detailed treatment of the Indian's plight see the reports written as legal evidence to be presented to the Indian Claims Commission in an attempt to determine Indian rights to the land. Specifically see Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Greenville Treaty, 1795," and Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, "Ethnohistory of Indian Use and Occupancy in Ohio and Indians Prior to 1795," in David Agee Horr, ed., Indians of Ohio and Indiana Prior to 1795, 2 vols., Garland American Indian Ethnohistory Series (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1974); Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, "An Ethnohistorical Report on the Wyandot, Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa of Northwest Ohio," in David Agee Horr, ed., Indians of Northwest Ohio, Garland American Indian Ethnohistory Series (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1974).

¹¹ For example see: Pittsburgh Gazette, March 10, 1792, p.3; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.3; The Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), March 21, 1792, pp.1-2; Columbian Centinel

to have transferred the title to the Northwest Territory to the United States. This treaty was argued to have negated not only the title to the land held by the Indians, but the inference was also made that the Indians' right to the soil had also been cancelled by that pact. The Indians were, therefore, considered trespassers since the United States had in turn never ceded the land back to them. Consequently, the Indians had "not any claim to the lands."¹²

Furthermore, the Indians were said to have alienated their right to the land by negotiating several treaties with the United States during the Confederation period. Contrary to Indian claims, these treaties were argued to have been both just and binding. By implication, therefore, American desires to negotiate with the tribes were considered acts of generosity, while Indian refusal to accept the United States offer was deemed justification for warfare. Thus, supporters of the Administration could argue that the United States had never done anything to provoke hostilities. "A Friend to Government," wrote that "the government of the United States has never

(Boston), April 7, 1792, p.1.

¹²The Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), March 21, 1792, pp.1-2; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), December 31, 1791, p.3.

asked anything of the hostile Indians but peace. It has sought no lands nor triumphs." Not only had the United States never sought any lands other than were rightfully theirs, wrote another correspondent, but the government would have been willing to protect the rights of the Indians to the lands they legally occupied. The government "sought no influence but what would have been procured for it among the savages by acts of beneficence and virtue." Once the people realized this then "the humanity of the United States will be abundantly apparent, and their conduct will receive, as its merits, the approbation of the enlightened part of mankind."¹³

Proponents of the Administration also found themselves forced to counter arguments that the Indians possessed the right to the soil from natural law. Any claim that the Indians had a right to the soil because they had lived there for generations, was said to be preposterous. If it were true, on what basis could such a claim be justified? How many Indians would it take to make the possession legal? If only one or two tribes resided in America could they claim the whole continent? If the arguments

¹³The Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), March 21, 1792, pp.1-2; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), February 9, 1792, p.1; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.3, February 1, 1792, p.3; Argus (Boston), January 13, 1792, p.2; Salem Gazette (Salem, Massachusetts), January 31, 1792, p.2.

of the pro-Indian writers were accepted, then by what right did the people of the eastern coast claim their cities? The people of Boston had once lived on lands claimed by the Indians but had taken the land from the tribes of that region. Why did they now attack the people of the frontier for acting in a similar fashion? The claim that the Indians possessed the land because they had first occupied it was, according to a frontier writer, similar to the claim of a child who said that an object belonged to him because he had seen it first.¹⁴

Furthermore, it had been argued that the Indians' title had been invalidated since they did not cultivate the land as nature intended. This argument appears partially based on a contemporary concept of the natural law which stated that no nation could "exclusively appropriate to themselves more land than they have occasion for, or more than they are able to settle and cultivate."¹⁵ The contention was that nature only gave to man the right to his own subsistence. The law of nature was said to be that the land must be farmed before possession of it could be established. By agriculture alone was man able to pro-

¹⁴ Pittsburgh Gazette, March 10, 1792, p.1; Boston Gazette, March 10, 1792, p.1; The Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), March 21, 1792, pp.1-2.

¹⁵ Felix S. Cohen, Handbook of Federal Indian Law (Albuquerque, New Mexico: n.d.), p.28.

vide for the greatest subsistence for the greatest number of people. The earth was for all men to make use of, not just a few who claimed it as their own. The land was given to all and must be used by all to the common good.¹⁶ The American citizen farmed the land, therefore, his title was superior to that of the Indian.

Indian title to the land was therefore denied on the basis of both written and natural law. These contentions, however, did not stand unopposed. An article which appeared in the American Mercury declared it to be inconsistent with justice to deny them their rights on any basis. The Indians were said to have violated no treaties worthy of the name. The treaties in question had been forced upon the Indians unjustly. The United States, declared "Anti-Pizarro" in the Boston Gazette, had no right to the land. Certainly, England could not have given it to us. England had no more right to surrender Indian lands to the United States than the Pope had when he transferred the entire continent to Spain. The treaty with England was said to have given the United States only pre-emption rights. England, therefore, could have given us no more since she possessed no more. Nor could the United States claim she had a just cause for war with the tribes since

¹⁶Pittsburgh Gazette, March 10, 1792, p.1; National Gazette (Philadelphia), February 4, 1792, p.1.

they aided Great Britain in the late war. Would it be just, the correspondent inquired, for England to declare war on Spain or Holland because they gave us some aid in the war? Or, again, could England have transferred our lands to Spain if she had won the war?¹⁷

The Indians, argued a contributor to the American Mercury, were the original discoverers of the land and therefore the land was theirs. The United States government was the aggressor in this war. So long as the Indians justly refused to sell the land to the United States, and as long as America continued to allow their settlers to live upon it, the war would continue and the blame would be theirs. The Indians were said to be in a position analogous to that of Great Britain and the United States before the revolution. They were simply attempting to resist our tyranny. Following our own example they were now refusing to yield their property. The Indians, after all, had never received full value for the lands they had surrendered to us. Even in those cases where we offered compensation, it was inadequate, and was accepted solely because we held a sword over their heads. The only tribes who had agreed to yield their lands had done so out of fear. It was little wonder that under such circumstances

¹⁷ American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), February 6, 1792, p.1, February 13, 1792, p.2; Boston Gazette, January 2, 1792, p.2, April 9, 1792, p.1, April 30, 1792,

the Indians, "disturbed on their native soil, feel all the boilings of injured innocence."¹⁸

Other correspondents likewise drew a parallel between the American experience with Great Britain and that of the Indians. Just as the British attempted to tax Americans without their consent, they were allegedly attempting to take their lands without their consent. The Indians therefore were said to feel towards Americans as they had felt toward Great Britain. Americans tended to deny rights to all Indians because of the actions of a few "banditti" yet forgot our own anger over British actions following the Boston Tea Party which also punished all for the actions of a few.¹⁹

The fact of the matter was, according to these correspondents, that Americans simply did not possess the lands we were attempting to take from the Indians. The first on the land have the legal possession of it, wrote one correspondent. "A Citizen of the United States," inquired, if we had purchased their lands from them? Did

pp.1-2.

¹⁸Boston Gazette, January 16, 1792, p.2, February 6, 1792, p.1.

¹⁹The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.2; Boston Gazette, January 30, 1792, p.1; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), January 9, 1792, p.2.

they not have the same regard for their hunting grounds that Americans had for their homes and farms? "Is the Indian title extinguished? bonafide? in good conscience? If not, what right have we on the ground?," asked another. The right of soil comes from God and was given to the Indians, wrote a contributor to a Boston paper. Therefore, if Americans denied them that right they were breaking His law. Moreover, Americans were even breaking their own laws, for they said that when a man was in possession of land for fifty years, it was his even if he had not purchased it. The Indians had been on the land for far longer than that.²⁰

It was clear, according to these arguments, that the Indians indeed owned the land, and, if they refused to negotiate with the Americans, then they had no choice but to accept their decision. This being the case, "Can a peace be just and lasting, that does not consider the Indians as free men -- as original lords and proprietors of this soil. . . ?" The Indians, after all, have a right to the soil as good as any other nation. Therefore, "Nothing but criminal selfishness" can justify America's

²⁰Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), January 21, 1792, p.3; Boston Gazette, January 30, 1792, p.1; Connecticut Courant (Hartford), January 16, 1792, p.1; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 12, 1792, pp.1-2.

trying to take their lands.²¹

Anyone who said that the Americans already owned the Indian lands was in error. All they had done was to take advantage of the ignorance of the Indians and of their good nature. They had not purchased their lands, rather, "Were they not horribly cheated?" The language of the Americans to the Indians had been from the first, "We are the Lords. . .therefore depart from us." We did not buy their lands from them, "A keg of whiskey or a few blankets or a treaty with a few drunken chiefs does not give. . . a kingdom."²²

The argument that since the tribes did not cultivate the land, therefore they could not claim title to it was declared to be ridiculous and a violation of common sense.²³ If cultivation determined ownership, then how could the United States claim sovereignty over all the untilled land between the Atlantic and the Mississippi? One reader wondered if those who advocated such a position

²¹The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 12, 1792, pp.1-2; May 3, 1792, p.1, March 15, 1792, p.2; Boston Gazette, April 30, 1792, pp.1-2; Argus (Boston), February 7, 1792, p.2.

²²The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 12, 1792, pp.1-2; Boston Gazette, April 30, 1792, pp.1-2; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.2.

²³See for example: Pittsburgh Gazette, March 10, 1792, p.1.

would object if the Indian were to settle on some of their property that had yet to be plowed.²⁴

In private, Administration officials would probably tend to agree with its critics in the press. The Administration indeed agreed that the Treaty of Paris had granted the United States title to the land in question. This title was considered absolute, however, it was not interpreted to constitute a forfeiture of the Indians' right to the soil. Rather, the Treaty had granted the United States the right of pre-emption. The government could acquire the Indian title to the land either by purchase or by conquest. In the early years of the Confederation, the government attempted to argue that the Indians had indeed lost the right of soil by conquest during the late war. This untenable position was soon reversed, however, as is seen in the decision to purchase Indian lands at the Treaty of Fort Harmar.²⁵

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had specifically

²⁴ The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 12, 1792, pp.1-2; Argus (Boston), February 21, 1792, p.1.

²⁵ For information on the nature of the American title to the land see: Cohen, Handbook of Federal Indian Law; Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years; Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812; Horr, ed., Indians of Ohio and Indiana Prior to 1795, 2 vols.; Horr, ed., Indians of Northwest Ohio; Jennings C. Wise, The Red Man in the New World Drama: A Politico-Legal Study with a Pageantry of American Indian History (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), ed. and revised by Vine Deloria, Jr.

stated that "The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their land and property shall never be taken away from them without their consent. . . ." ²⁶

The Washington Administration endorsed this viewpoint as illustrated in the fact that the Ordinance of 1787 was adopted by the First Congress in August of 1789. ²⁷ The Administration's acceptance of the Indians' title is further indicated by the statement of the architect of Washington's Indian policy, Henry Knox, that "The Indians being the prior occupants, possess the right of the soil. It cannot be taken from them unless by their free consent, or by the right of conquest in case of a just war." ²⁸ This also was Jefferson's interpretation of American rights to the land. When asked what he understood to be the American right, he stated that the nation's rights were limited to "A right of preemption [sic] of their lands," and "a right of regulating the commerce between them and the whites." ²⁹

²⁶ Clarence E. Carter, ed., The Territorial Papers of the United States (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), II, pp.39-50.

²⁷ Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs, p.30.

²⁸ Knox to Washington, June 15, 1789, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, p.13.

²⁹ Franklin B. Sawvel, ed., The Anas of Thomas Jefferson (Reprint edition, New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), p.80.

If the government's opinion was apparently so benign towards the Indians, then how can the extensive criticisms appearing in the press be explained? One explanation was that the government did not acknowledge this fact to the Indians in their negotiations during the Confederation period. The Indians were led to believe that the Americans were claiming complete sovereignty over the land and that only American generosity accounted for the Indians' right to remain in the Northwest. Not until the intensive peace offensive following St. Clair's defeat did the government's Indian commissioners admit earlier errors to the Indians and concede that the right of the soil belonged to them.³⁰ But, by that time it was too late to make any difference to the tribes. Flushed with their victories over Harmar and St. Clair the tribesmen were demanding the Ohio River boundary as the sine qua non of future treaties.

In addition, the same Northwest Ordinance which guaranteed Indian rights to the soil, and which was subsequently adopted by Congress, contained other provisions which made it clear that the government fully intended to occupy the Indian lands in the Northwest.³¹

³⁰ See Chapter III of this paper for information on the treaty negotiations of 1793.

³¹ The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 made it clear

While stating guarantees of Indian rights to the soil, the government never contemplated foregoing American expansion into the area north of the Ohio River. The American position was that the lands could only be acquired from the Indians by purchase or by conquest in a just war. While the government certainly desired to acquire them by negotiation, this proved to be not possible. Therefore, the nation resorted to war which it naturally deemed to be a just one. It was this decision that provoked the anti-Administration sentiments in the press.

The advocates of the Indians' rights to the land also sought to defend the individual rights of the Indians which they felt were being ignored by the Administration. The Indians were men, claimed "Plain Dealer" in Boston's Independent Chronicle, yet they were not being treated as possessing the rights and privileges of other men. And, since the Indians were men, they had the right to live as such since they possessed not only the right to political liberty, but the right to receive the good will of all and the full blessings of life.³²

The Administration had voiced its desire to civ-

that the nation intended to settle and establish states in the territory stretching westward to the Mississippi River. See Carter, ed., Territorial Papers, II, pp.39-50.

³²The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 12,

ilize and Christianize the Indians as a method of solving the Indian problem. These sentiments were brought under question. The Administration spoke of Christianizing the Indians and claimed that it treated them with freedom, peace and dignity, argued a subscriber, yet the Indian was said to be treated as an animal. If they were good enough for heaven, they were certainly good enough for earth as well, declared another correspondent. Since the "Indians have as good a right to live in a wilderness, as we have in a well cultivated country," their continued mistreatment, warned one writer, might lead to God's wrath being brought down upon the heads of the nation. Perhaps God might see fit "to sit an INDIAN CHIEF as the head of this American Empire."³³

A writer signing himself, "Polybius" admitted that the tribes had resisted attempts at civilizing them. Nevertheless, he wrote, they possessed virtues in their natural state "which do honor to human nature." Although their nomadic way of life did retard their full development, he concluded, this could not be construed to constitute a forfeiture of their natural rights.³⁴

1792, pp.1-2.

³³ The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 12, 1792, pp.1-2, June 21, 1792, p.1.

³⁴ Apollo (Boston), No.6 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.57-59.

The harsh and callous attitude toward the Indians harbored by some pro-Administration advocates came under fire by the supporters of the rights of the Indians. The Indians were called "beasts of prey" cried one correspondent, and we are urged "to penetrate the forests where they haunt, and extirpate the race. Good God! is this our temper toward these unfortunate people?" "Polybius" abhorred the fact that the Indians had commonly been spoken of with indignation and contempt. Some anti-Indian correspondents had even declared that they deserved no other treatment than extermination. In a similar vein, a correspondent in the National Gazette stated that the white man treated the Indians like beasts who must be driven west of the Mississippi. This idea, that the Indian must be exterminated or exiled, was declared to be too horrible to be contemplated by any civilized person, let alone to make it the policy of the United States government.³⁵

One correspondent satirized the arguments of those who denied the Indians their rights. He wished to inform the Indians that motivated only by the highest sentiments of mankind, the United States had decided to

³⁵National Gazette (Philadelphia), February 3, 1792, p.1; Apollo (Boston), No.6 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.57-59, No.8 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.77-78; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.2.

drive them from the face of the earth. Having consulted the laws of the nation, he discovered that the Indians had no more right to the land than the buffalo. It seemed that their gardens were not big enough to give them any rights to the soil. In addition, it was to be remembered that the King of England had sold the Indians, their children and their lands to the Americans who were "possessed of all THAT IS GOOD AND GREAT -- THE RESULT OF EDUCATION." And since the Indians were "But One Degree Removed From Beasts" it had been decided in order to "prevent the effect of our wrath justly exerted against you, you are required, after restoring the artillery and arms you unjustly took possession of on the 4th of November last, to retire from all countries east of the river Mississippi." There the tribes would be allowed to remain till the United States should decide they wanted that land as well. Finally, he concluded, should the Indians not be responsive to these humane sentiments, the American Army would be forced to destroy them.³⁶

The volume of material flowing daily into the press in defense of the rights of the Indians was impressive. One of the more voluminous contributors for Indian

³⁶Boston Gazette, March 19, 1792, p.1.

rights signed himself "Plain Dealer". This correspondent stated his belief that the Indians were a people with great potential. People did not lose their rights, he argued, just because they did not know science or were unable to hold their liquor or happened to be of a different colour. We seemed to be confused, he wrote, as to just what Indians were. We say they are like beasts, they must be removed from the land, and that they are sub-human. But, on the other hand, we say we want to negotiate with them, which presupposes them to be men. If they were men then any person who claimed rights for himself must grant those same rights to the Indians. Taking a jab at the Administration, he added that the rights of man were for all and only a despot would ignore this fact. If our revolution speaks of the rights of man, we could not violate the Indians' rights without injuring ourselves in the process.³⁷

In spite of the strength and volume of arguments on behalf of the Indians, it is not to be thought that all of these correspondents were willing to allow the Indians full ownership of vast stretches of American territory. Having defended the Indians at length, it was common for the subscriber to suggest that the Indian should

³⁷The Independent Chronicle (Boston), June 21, 1792, p.1.

be civilized so he could live in the manner of the white man. Once he realized that he was able to better himself and be accepted into white society, he would apply himself with vigour to improving his civilization. Or, if this was not possible, then, since "civilized and uncivilized people cannot live in the same neighborhood," the settlement of the west should be allowed to take place in a gradual fashion. As farms appeared in greater number, the animal life would be forced away and the land could no longer sustain the Indian's way of life.³⁸

Perhaps the answer was to allow the Indian to plead his case before Congress. "Is it not most essentially necessary for the peace and welfare of this continent that the Indians should be represented in the Federal Senate and House of Representatives?" it was asked. For, "Pride of colour must give way to necessity, to justice, the refinements and politeness of civilization, must blend and unite with the honour, fortitude, secrecy, courage, gratitude and every other manly virtue the Indian character exhibits in a natural and unadulterated state." For this reason, all attempts at peace would be in vain, he concluded, while the Indians go unrepresented

³⁸ The Independent Chronicle (Boston), June 14, 1792, p.1; Apollo (Boston), No.8 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.77-78. See also Boston Gazette, April 30, 1792, pp.1-2; The Freeman's Journal (Philadelphia), January 25, 1792, p.3.

in Congress.³⁹ This particular argument was, however, an isolated one. Few echoed these sentiments. Most were satisfied with suggesting that the Indians be civilized in some fashion, thus allowing the American people to both achieve western peace and acquire the land which they desired.⁴⁰

These defenses of Indian rights were strongly attacked by the war's proponents. The atrocities committed by the Indians were simply forgotten about by such writers, wrote "A Lover of Peace". Instead they blamed their own government while the peaceful efforts of the Administration were "entirely winked out of sight by those who, at this particular crisis, appear to feel so much for the rights of Indians, and so little for the numberless burnings, murders, and robberies committed for the last seven years," against the people of the frontier.⁴¹

The people must not forget the "barbarity and cruelties" of the Indians, wrote another correspondent.⁴²

³⁹ Boston Gazette, January 16, 1792, p.2; Argus (Boston), February 7, 1792, p.2.

⁴⁰ See for example: Boston Gazette, January 30, 1792, p.1.

⁴¹ Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.3.

⁴² Argus (Boston), January 13, 1792, p.2.

And, in case they might forget that the Indians had been guilty of numerous outrages against the settlers, one paper provided a lengthy list of such actions under the heading "INDIAN BARBARITY" which the reader was advised to study carefully. The cruelties of the Indians, therefore, had made the war unavoidable for the nation. Rather than allowing the tomahawk to fall upon defenseless citizens, the government had been forced to act in their defense.⁴³

What was the government to do, asked one correspondent, when her citizens were being mercilessly slaughtered on the frontier? "Must we sit idle," he inquired, "and let those Hypeds [sic] murder us at their pleasure? -- Shall our wives and children be butchered, and we pronounce it -- 'All very just!'" No responsible government could act in that way. Rather, "Government must do its duty, and protect the defenceless, according to the social compact, and trust to the good sense of the citizens for its justification."⁴⁴

⁴³ Salem Gazette (Salem, Massachusetts), January 31, 1792, p.2; Argus (Boston), May 25, 1792, p.3.

⁴⁴ Salem Gazette (Salem, Massachusetts), January 17, 1792, p.2; January 31, 1792, p.2; Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.3, February 8, 1792, p.3; The Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), March 21, 1792, pp.1-2; Argus (Boston), January 17, 1792, p.2.

While some might have denied the humanity of the Indian, or advocated his extermination, these attitudes did not prevail within the Administration. The view of the Indian entertained by members of the Administration was benevolent. President Washington was appalled that "our frontier Settlers entertain the opinion that there is not the same crime (or indeed no crime at all) in killing an Indian as in killing a white man."⁴⁵ It was his desire that the Indians "should experience the benefits of an impartial administration of justice."⁴⁶ Furthermore, Henry Knox, the Secretary of War had stated that "the Indians possess the natural rights of man, and that they ought not wantonly be divested thereof, cannot be well denied."⁴⁷

The sincerity of the Administration's professed desire to protect the rights of the Indians was attested to both by the passage of the first Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of July 22, 1790, and in Washington's

⁴⁵Washington to David Humphreys, July 20, 1791, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, XXXI (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), pp.317-321. (Hereinafter referred to as Writings of Washington.).

⁴⁶Third Annual Message to Congress, October 25, 1791, Ibid., pp.396-404.

⁴⁷Knox to Washington, June 15, 1789, A.S.P., I.A., I, p.13.

recommendations to Congress in his annual messages of both 1791 and 1792.⁴⁸ The Indian Trade and Intercourse Act provided for punishment of whites who committed crimes in the Indian territory and further attempted to protect Indian land titles by forbidding the purchase of Indian lands by individuals.⁴⁹ Subsequent to the passage of that act, Washington went before Congress and called upon them to enact a program which would assure justice to the Indians and provide for the punishments of anyone who would violate their rights.⁵⁰

If the Washington Administration recognized the Indian right to the soil, and sought to protect the rights of the individual Indian against encroachment, then from whence came the war and the complaints leveled against the Administration because of it? The problem arose in a different quarter. Some opponents of the war placed the blame for the hostilities squarely on the shoulders

⁴⁸Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years, pp.45-47. Also see Third Annual Message to Congress, October 25, 1791, Writings of Washington, XXXI, pp.398-404; Fourth Annual Address to Congress, November 6, 1792, Writings of Washington, XXXII, pp.205-212.

⁴⁹Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years, pp.45-46, 143-145; Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs, pp.18-19.

⁵⁰Fourth Annual Address to Congress, November 6, 1792, Writings of Washington, XXXII, pp.205-212.

of the white settlers on the frontier. It was their refusal to acknowledge the legitimate rights of the Indians which precipitated the conflict. A restless, aggressive and land-hungry frontier population was alleged to be the cause of the Indian War.

It was the settler who moved onto the frontier and violated the rights of the Indians which was alleged, by some opponents of the Indian War, to be at the root of the nation's problems. After he had angered the Indians by encroaching upon their lands, he had the audacity to call upon the rest of the nation to come to his aid. A writer signing himself "Piomingo" stated that the Secretary of War placed all the blame on what he called Indian "banditti". But, he stated, there was another and worse kind of "banditti". These were the ones who plundered the Indians and robbed them of their lands, cheated them out of their property and murdered them whenever the opportunity appeared. Only when these "banditti" were restrained would peace be possible. If the Indians who had no government were blamed for not being able to stop their "banditti", then how much more was our government to be blamed for not stopping the white "banditti"!⁵¹

Three out of four frontier problems were caused

⁵¹The Independent Chronicle, May 15, 1792, p.2; Boston Gazette, February 27, 1792, p.1.

by the whites stated one article. While another correspondent felt the percentage of hostilities precipitated by the whites to be much higher. "That in all contentions between the native Indians and the white settlers nineteen times out of twenty, the latter were the aggressors." This being the case the government was said to be free of all obligation to those people.⁵²

The pattern of frontier encroachment on Indian lands was described by "Anti-Pizzaro". Once the settler forced his way onto the land the Indian hunters were killed or made drunk or simply robbed of their furs. The Indians, naturally, made reprisals. The settlers in their turn cried that they had been attacked without reason and retaliated in kind. The cry that our poor American citizens had been murdered savagely on the frontier then went up from one end of the country to the other. Those who had a stake in the frontier consequently put pressure on the government which was forced into a fruitless Indian War to satisfy the ambitions of a few, therefore "is there not something rotten in the state of Denmark?" "Is it not certain," concluded "Anti-Pizarro", "that our frontier people are the aggressors?"⁵³

⁵²The Independent Chronicle (Boston), March 22, 1792, p.2; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), March 3, 1792, p.3.

⁵³Boston Gazette, January 2, 1792, p.2.

Western claims that they were the innocent victims of unprovoked attacks was satirized by an eastern paper which carried a fictitious tale of "a most extraordinary and alarming piece of intelligence." It seems that five Indians were sitting peacefully on a log in the wilderness when they were fired upon by a party of frontiersmen. In response to that attack upon them, "the Indians were so barbarous as to return the fire."⁵⁴

The opponents of the war did acknowledge that the Indians made attacks along the frontier and killed American citizens. However, it was argued that if the true circumstances were known, the Indians' "conduct might appear more like retaliation, than a mere wanton disposition to murder and plunder." True, it was said, we only hear of Indian barbarities. But, this was because we had a printing press and the Indians did not. Common sense should tell us the real truth, it was stated. The Indians were a people who lived by hunting and they already possessed a vast area of land. Why, therefore, would they be attacking us? Why would they leave their life of simplicity and attempt to conquer our lands?⁵⁵

⁵⁴Apollo (Boston), No.20 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.22-26.

⁵⁵The Independent Chronicle (Boston), February 9, 1792, p.3, February 16, 1792, p.1; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), February 6, 1792, p.1; The General

These accusations against the settlers on the frontier quickly took on sectional overtones as anti-war writers began to question the value of the West to the nation. Two armies had already been lost and the government was preparing to waste a third, wrote a correspondent. The West was simply not worth the effort. The acquisition of that land was said to be not worth a single life. Sectional animosities were evident in critical questions appearing in the press. Why should we settle the West? Why should Americans depopulate their own territory to settle an area that would be useless for many centuries? One correspondent felt that those who died in the western wars were more valuable to the nation than all the land in the West. "The blood of our countrymen is too precious, to moisten the soil of the wilderness," he concluded.⁵⁶

Similarly, "Braddock" argued that the nation had not "become so crowded with inhabitants as to require our planting colonies in the wilderness to ease ourselves of supernumerary inhabitants." He declared that the nation had not become so over-populated that the people had no

Advertiser (Philadelphia), March 3, 1792, p.3.

⁵⁶The Independent Chronicle (Boston), March 22, 1792, p.2; Boston Gazette, January 30, 1792, p.1; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), December 26, 1791, p.3.

more land to farm, or that children were forced to live in the old family house for want of room. Therefore, "upon what principle either of interest or policy, are we so immediately urged to spill the blood of our young men, and expend the revenue of the States to obtain more?" It was "Braddock's" opinion that all those who emigrated to the West, stopped being useful citizens and rather became burdens on the government.⁵⁷

One writer went further than "Braddock" and declared that the westerners were not simply a burden on the government but an active threat to the nation. The western settlements were accused of injuring the eastern states by sending all their trade through Spanish or English ports. Worse, they were accused of planning to secede from the union, "and become our bitterest and most dangerous enemies."⁵⁸

Supporters of the war responded with alacrity to attacks upon the frontier settlers. "IRONICUS" spoke out bitterly against those who sympathized with the Indians and placed the blame for frontier hostilities on the settlers and the leaders of the government. Since

⁵⁷ American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), January 9, 1792, p.2.

⁵⁸ The Independent Chronicle (Boston), March 15, 1792, p.2.

the war was unpopular, he wrote, perhaps it would be best to "humbly acknowledge the cruelty and injustice of which we and our fathers have been guilty." Perhaps we should give the lands back to the Indians and accept them to be our masters. Then, if that proves to be insufficient and the Indians are still unhappy, we should allow them to rob and murder the frontier people. Further, we should "brand with infamy" the name of those who died on the banks of the Miami River, if peace should require it. St. Clair and Secretary Knox and anyone else the Indians opposed should be executed at once, without a trial, since this would deter others from acting against the rights of the Indians. "Should the head of President WASHINGTON be demanded," however, he concluded, "some deliberation may be necessary, because many people are still so foolish and unadvised as to remember his past services to America, and yet entertain a good opinion of his prudence, justice and impartiality."⁵⁹

"I am not surprised," wrote a westerner, "at the pacific paragraphs in the newspapers with respect to Indian affairs." The East simply did not understand the frontier situation. If that section of the nation were brought to understand the dilemma of the frontier, the writer was certain that the war would meet with their

⁵⁹Columbian Centinel (Boston), April 21, 1792, p.2.

approbation. Unfortunately, "The mountains form a barrier beyond which no just knowledge or just feelings of the country can pass."⁶⁰

Brackenridge of Pittsburgh was not so understanding of the ignorance of the East. He compared the attitudes of the Easterners toward the West with those of young girls who spend all their spare time reading romances. Like the young girls, the Easterners possessed no knowledge of reality. The man who lived in the West and experienced it, wrote Brackenridge, knew more about its realities than the wisest man in the East who had never visited the frontier. The only question at issue, concluded Brackenridge was "Whether we shall submit ourselves to the savages or they to us. . . ?"⁶¹

The Administration was well aware that most trouble on the frontier arose from the white encroachments onto Indian lands. Washington knew well that peace was not possible so long as "the disorderly conduct of our borderers is suffered with impunity."⁶² If the settlers' assaults

⁶⁰Boston Gazette, March 26, 1792, p.1; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), March 12, 1792, pp.1-2.

⁶¹The Concord Herald (Concord, New Hampshire), March 21, 1792, pp.1-2; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), March 12, 1792, pp.1-2.

⁶²Washington to the Secretary of the Treasury, April 4, 1791, Writings of Washington, XXXI, pp.273-274.

against the Indians did not stop "all pacific plans must prove nugatory." It was to protect the rights of the Indians as much as to promote trade among them, that Washington supported the passage of the first Indian Trade and Intercourse Act in 1790. When that measure proved inadequate in preventing white violation of the Indians' rights he urged a stronger measure upon the Congress.⁶³ The result was the second Indian Trade and Intercourse Act passed in March, 1793. This act increased the government's authority to apprehend and convict those who would violate the Indians' rights.⁶⁴

Other cabinet officials agreed with the President's objective of restraining the settlers from provoking the Indians into war. Knox stated that the encroachments upon Indian land which were occurring with great regularity "appears to be a principal cause of Indian wars."⁶⁵ Jefferson agreed that the settlers were more the aggressors than the victims in the frontier hostilities. He wrote with a hint of sarcasm that "I am

⁶³Fourth Annual Address to Congress, November 6, 1792, Writings of Washington, XXXII, pp.205-212.

⁶⁴Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years, pp.47, 145; Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs, pp.18-19.

⁶⁵Knox to Washington, December 29, 1794, A.S.P., I.A., I, pp.543-544.

satisfied it will ever be preferred to send armed force and make war against the intruders as being more just and less expensive."⁶⁶

While recognizing that the Indians held the right to the soil, that they were owed the rights of all mankind, and that the white settlers were largely responsible for the hostilities on the frontier, the government still sided with the citizens of the West. The ideal situation for the government would have been one in which the Indians willingly sold parcels of their land to the government as the frontier expanded slowly and in an orderly fashion. But this ideal situation never materialized. Neither abstract concepts of the natural law nor statutes of the United States government could stop the rush of settlers into the Indian territory. Faced with a difficult moral decision, the government decided to support its own. To have done otherwise would have caused the loss of western loyalty and perhaps a division of the union. Jefferson's suggestion that the army be used against the settlers was an unrealistic alternative for an Administration desirous of maintaining national unity. The frontier Indian war had been forced upon an unwilling

⁶⁶Thomas Jefferson to David Campbell, March 27, 1792, quoted in Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years, p.139.

government by rapacious land-seeking frontier citizens.

The criticism of the Administration's Indian policies also spread to include the government's apparent acquiescence in the British retention of the Northwest Posts. It was the aid rendered by the British from those forts to the Indians that was said to be the root of the Indian problem. The government had failed "to remove the source of our present calamity," declared one writer, "I mean the British posts."⁶⁷

For years the people had been informed in the press of the aid to the Indians that flowed from the British Posts. Even before St. Clair's forces had begun to march, the people learned in their papers that considerable British aid was expected to strengthen the Indians against the projected invasion of their territory. "We hear the Indians are fortifying themselves, and intend, with the assistance of 600 British troops, to give us battle," wrote one correspondent. The Indians were well provided with supplies from the Canadians, wrote another. While an officer in the western army further confirmed the existence of English aid to the Indians, ". . .they drew provisions. . .at the British post of

⁶⁷ Argus (Boston), March 9, 1792, p.2. Also see Brunswick Gazette (New Brunswick, New Jersey), January 17, 1792, p.3; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), February 3, 1792, p.2.

Detroit, and. . .encouragement was held out to the Canadians to join the savages in hostilities against us."⁶⁸

After the battle, unconfirmed reports appeared in the press which supported American suspicions. "By a private letter from a gentleman in Quebec to his friend in this town, we are assured that Twelve Hundred Canadians were in the late action with St. Clair," wrote one observer. From the frontier post of Fort Franklin came an exaggerated account that eight hundred Canadians were killed in the battle of November 4. Then, from a man who had recently escaped imprisonment at Detroit, came the report that "during his continuance there, both prior and subsequent to the unfortunate battle, he saw continued supplies of provisions and ammunition of all kinds going to the Indians." Not only that, but "the Canadians have a chain of deposits from Detroit to the Indian Camp." Furthermore, he stated, on the return from the battle against St. Clair he had seen many "WHITE ANIMALS, completely disguised as Indians."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Boston Gazette, December 5, 1791, p.1, December 7, 1791, p.2, December 12, 1791, p.1. Also see American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), December 26, 1791, p.3.

⁶⁹ Boston Gazette, February 6, 1792, p.2, February 20, 1792, p.2. Also see Apollo (Boston), January 30, 1792, p.84; American Mercury (Hartford, Connecticut), February 6, 1792, p.3; Argus (Boston), February 17, 1792, p.3.

It was not surprising, therefore, that some correspondents began to question whether we could ever have peace so long as the British were allowed to hold the Northwest Posts. If the Indians ever were to be defeated, it was argued, the British influence over them must be terminated. So long as the British merchants and traders at Detroit supplied them, the Indians fought on. The Canadians stood to profit handsomely from an Indian victory. If the Indians lost, then they would lose a most valuable fur trade. Therefore, it stood to reason that they aided the Indians and desired to see the United States restricted to an area east of the Alleghenys and south of the Ohio River.⁷⁰

Why do we not use the army to drive these British from the posts, asked a correspondent? They had been in possession of them for eight years and the time had come to remove them, declared another. "Does not the chief strength of the Indian appear to lay near the British posts (our forts). . . If so, should we not strike at the root of the evil?" inquired "A.B.". It was clear that the most hostile of the Indian tribes were those living near the British Posts, said others. Therefore, "Would not the acquisition of these posts be of essential advantage?"

⁷⁰ Argus (Boston), February 7, 1792, p.2; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 12, 1792, pp.1-2.

To still another correspondent, "the source of our present calamity" was obviously the British presence in our posts. They have had years to move since they committed themselves to do so after the Revolutionary War. If that amount of time does not seem to be sufficient, "we, as their good neighbors, should lend them a hand to move their heavy baggage on the other side of the lakes on their own premises."⁷¹

A correspondent in Boston's Apollo suggested that the proper response to British aid to the Indians was to tax the English more heavily. His proposal was to levy extra duties against English imports and then use the excess revenue to help pay for the expense of fighting the Indian War. Certainly, he felt, this would make them less likely to aid the Indians and more inclined to restoring peace to the frontiers. Such a duty, might in fact, convince them to remove themselves from the Posts.⁷²

The British retention of the Posts was declared to have done irreparable damage to our nation's honor. If the Posts in question did indeed belong to our govern-

⁷¹Boston Gazette, April 30, 1792, pp.1-2; The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.2; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), April 12, 1792, pp.1-2; National Gazette (Philadelphia), February 3, 1792, p.1.

⁷²Apollo (Boston), No.6 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.57-59.

ment, "is it not an impeachment of the national honor to permit them to be wrongfully withheld by a power, at least, not over friendly to the sovereignty of America?" A correspondent from Albany, New York, believed it was a national disgrace that the British had not been forced to move from our territory. "It is time to shake off this foreign yoke." If our leaders want peace then, "Let our rulers. . .first determine to break that disgraceful chain with which our northern frontiers are bound." After all, the spirit of the Revolution was not dead. It had not been "so long since Yorktown was taken that we have forgot how to conduct the seige." Another correspondent wanted to know if perhaps it was Administration policy to allow the British to keep the Posts, and, thereby be in a position to launch hostilities against our borders anytime they so desired? But, if that was the case, then "let it be pointed out; but let not the feeling and honour of Americans be subject to continual goadings without knowing wherefore."⁷³

While the accusations made in the press against

⁷³The General Advertiser (Philadelphia), January 14, 1792, p.2; Apollo (Boston), No.6 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.57-59, No.8 - Part II, Vol.I, pp.77-78; The Independent Chronicle (Boston), June 21, 1792, p.1.

the English were exaggerated on some counts, the basic charges were valid. The English did refuse to withdraw from the Northwest Posts, and British agents did offer material and diplomatic support to the Indians of the Northwest. Although the United States registered formal complaints against the British for violating their earlier agreement to abandon the Posts, its demands went unheeded. The British, anxious to maintain both Indian friendship and Indian trade, steadfastly refused to surrender the Posts until the United States fulfilled its alleged obligations under the Treaty of Paris regarding the payments of debts and the restoration of loyalist properties.⁷⁴

While the Administration would negotiate at length for British removal from the Posts, it was strangely silent on the subject of British aid to the Indians. When newspaper allegations against the Indians began to appear following St. Clair's defeat, the British minister to the United States heatedly complained to the Secretary of State of their inaccuracy and denied English compli-

⁷⁴ See for example: Samuel Flagg Bemis, Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy (New Haven: Yale University Press, rev. ed., 1962); Charles Ritcheson, Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783-1795 (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969); A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940).

city.⁷⁵ In response, Jefferson was quick to thank the minister for his assurances of England's innocence and informed him that the opinions he saw in the press did not reflect those of the Administration. Furthermore, he reminded the minister that Knox's report to the Congress, on the causes of the Indian War, made no accusations against the English government.⁷⁶ Yet, in spite of these public statements of the Administration, the private correspondence of Washington, Jefferson and Knox indicate that they were convinced that the British were offering essential support to the Indians from the Posts.⁷⁷

The American reluctance to formally confront the

⁷⁵ George Hammond to Thomas Jefferson, December 14, 1791, in William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Canadian Relations, 1784-1860 (Washington, D.C.: 1940), I, p.387; George Hammond to Thomas Jefferson, January 30, 1792, Ibid., pp.389-390.

⁷⁶ Jefferson to Hammond, February 2, 1792, in H.A. Washington, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York: John C. Riker, 1854), III, pp.330-331.

⁷⁷ See for example: Jefferson to Gouverneur Morris, March 10, 1792, Ibid., pp.338-340; Washington to Gouverneur Morris, June 21, 1792, Writings of Washington, XXXII, pp.60-64; Knox to Wayne, August 7, 1792, Wayne Papers, Clements Library; Knox to Wayne, August 10, 1792, Ibid. For similar sentiments also see Wayne to Knox, July 6, 1792, Wayne Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library; Alex Macomb to Knox, July 14, 1792, Knox Papers, XXX, Massachusetts Historical Society; John Heckenwalder's Information of the Conduct of the British Respecting the Indian War, June 17-23, 1793, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Putnam to Knox, July 11, 1792, Putnam Papers, Marietta College Library.

English with its suspicions appear to arise for two reasons. First, the nation was new and anxious to find a place for itself among the family of nations. The presence of the British in the Northwest Posts was embarrassment enough. If it were publically acknowledged that the British were also acting with impunity in aiding the tribes of the Northwest, national honor might have been seriously impaired. Secondly, a public accusation against the British might well have incited the American people to demand that the United States expel the British immediately from its soil. This in turn could have easily led to a war with Great Britain that the Administration knew the country could not afford.

These assaults upon the American Indian policies which filled the pages of the nation's newspapers following St. Clair's defeat, increased the Administration's determination to act decisively to bring the Northwest under its control. The Administration's two pronged policy of intensive peace negotiation and intensive preparation for war in the event those negotiations should fail, reflect this determination on the part of the government.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

When President Washington approved plans to send General Arthur St. Clair's army into the wilderness, it was with the thought of ending the frontier crisis in which the nation had been embroiled since the end of the Revolutionary War. The slowness in assembling the army, deficiencies in the supply corps and the tenacity of the Indians combined to thwart American hopes. Rather than ending the frontier problems, the army's defeat exacerbated them. Furthermore, it gave rise to new problems which the Administration could not have foreseen.

The magnitude of the American losses, combined with a public outcry against the war, opened the door to a thorough and exhaustive debate, both in and out of Congress, over the propriety of American policies. What had begun as a simple military campaign into the Northwest Territory blossomed into widespread criticisms of the Washington Administration. In effect, the defeat provided the opening shot in a series of party wars which would vex the Administration from this point onwards.

No sooner had the Administration received word of

the defeat than it proposed to Congress measures to create a new and enlarged force to end the Indian menace in the Northwest. The debates which ensued in the House of Representatives over the creation and funding of that force, provoked serious questioning of the Administration's policies. These attacks, which closely paralleled those appearing in the press, covered a wide range of issues. The Administration had contended that the only goal of the United States government had been to achieve a just and honest peace with the tribes of the Northwest. Unfortunately, some Indians had turned their backs upon American efforts to negotiate and instead launched unprovoked assaults upon the frontier. The result was that the government was forced to resort to war. This argument of the government was quickly assailed. The Administration was accused of desiring war rather than the peace it claimed to be seeking. The real reasons behind the war were said to be a Cabinet secret. The Administration was also criticized for not restraining the frontier settlers from provoking war by encroaching upon the Indians' land. Furthermore, the Administration was cautioned that so long as the British were allowed to go unmolested in their retention of the Northwest Posts, "we can never hope to succeed against the Indians."¹

¹Annals of Congress, 2nd Cong., 1st Sess., Col. 338.

But, the opponents of the Administration policies centered their attacks chiefly upon the person of the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. He was the leader of the growing Federalist faction and his economic policies were despised by the Republican faction. It was clear that the opponents of Hamilton's programs made every possible use of the opportunities presented them, in the wake of St. Clair's defeat, to lessen the influence of the Secretary in governmental affairs.

In the debate over the bill to create a new army, for example, Hamilton was accused of using the frontier war as an excuse to foster his own policies. It was alleged that the war provided him with the means to promote taxation to support his various programs. One critic asked if "the submission of a provision to defend the frontier authorized a system for the encouragement of manufactures." If so, he stated, it leads one to think that the "Administration will not permit us to defend the helpless women and children of the frontier from the brutal ferocity of a savage foe," unless the House of Representatives was willing to give the executive branch the right to pass "a perpetual tax."²

Hamilton also found himself under assault in the debate over the means of funding the new army created by

²Ibid., Cols. 349-354.

Congress. This time Madison led the opposition against him. The Republicans had come to regret that they had allowed the Treasury Department to make legislative recommendations. Hamilton's reports on the public credit, enacted into law by the Congress, had created a situation in which the executive branch had considerable sway over the legislative branch. Determined to prevent the Treasury from continuing such influence, Madison proposed that the House refuse to allow Hamilton to propose the ways and means of funding the new army. Although Madison lost on this issue, the vote was extremely close. And, the issue was a serious one. A victory for Madison in this case would very likely have led to Hamilton's resignation.³

The Administration was also under attack in the press. The main targets of the opposition were Henry Knox and Alexander Hamilton. Knox was violently assailed by his critics and his resignation was called for. However, once more it was Hamilton who was the main object of Republican attacks. The war was alleged to be a means

³Alexander Hamilton to Edward Carrington, May 26, 1792, in Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., The Papers of Alexander Hamilton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), XI, pp.426-445. The importance of this issue is developed in Gerald Clarfield, "Protecting the Frontiers: Defense Policy and the Tariff Question in the First Washington Administration," William and Mary Quarterly, XXXII (June, 1975), pp.443-464.

by which Hamilton could maintain the public debt, and foster the interests of the speculators. Hamilton was able to withstand these attacks upon his position and powers, but it was becoming increasingly evident that party warfare was underway.

The defeat of St. Clair was so severe and provided such a shock to the nation that Congress was moved to institute an investigation into the causes behind its failure. Following the precedent set by the English Parliament in examining charges of corruption in government in 1621, the Congress, for the first time, exercised its rights to inquire into the conduct of the executive. Such an inquiry was acknowledged to be an auxiliary of the right of the Congress to impeach executive officials, and this inquiry was considered a prelude to possible impeachment procedures. The Administration readily conceded that such was the power of the Congress. Since "the House was an inquest, therefore [it] might institute inquiries into executive conduct."⁴ In this manner, the defeat of St. Clair led to an enhancement of the power of the House and provided the first in a long series of Congressional investigations into the conduct of the executive branch.

⁴Franklin B. Sawvel, ed., The Anas of Thomas Jefferson (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), pp.70-72.

The decision by the House to begin an investigation of the defeat was followed by a request that the Secretary of War provide all papers in his possession which bore on the topic of their investigation. This call for executive papers was the first of its kind and led the President into a series of Cabinet meetings on the topic. The Administration readily admitted the right of Congress to call for an investigation. However, the Congressional Committee's call for executive papers was another matter. On this issue, the Cabinet decided that while the Congress had a right to the papers, the Administration could withhold documents that would serve to injure the public interest. No evidence exists that the Congress was informed of this decision by the Executive, and certainly they never agreed to it. Nevertheless, proponents of the right which has come to be known as "executive privilege" have used the St. Clair episode as a principal foundation of their arguments ever since.⁵

⁵In March, 1957, Senator Thomas C. Hennings, Jr., of Missouri, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, requested the Attorney General of the United States to prepare an opinion on the right of the executive to withhold information from the Congress. In reply, the then Deputy Attorney General, William P. Rogers, presented a lengthy memorandum in which the right of executive privilege was defended. A principal foundation of that privilege was stated to be the Cabinet decision in the St. Clair case, that the President had the right to withhold information from Congress which he deemed prejudicial to the public interest. See Adam Carlyle Breckenridge, The

Another decision of the Cabinet on the matter of the St. Clair investigation also relates to executive privilege. The Cabinet decision was that the President himself should be addressed by the House in requesting information -- not the department heads. This the Congress did agree to and revised their request to fit this proviso. Their action in so doing spreads the cloak of "executive privilege" over department heads as a means of protecting them against unwanted investigations by the legislative branch.⁶

The atmosphere took on a partisan cast as Congress proceeded to carry out its investigation of the defeat. The committee, while exonerating St. Clair, implied that culpability should be attached to the Administration officials charged with planning and executing the unsuccessful operation. The main targets of their criticisms were the Secretaries of War and the Treasury whose duties were to execute and fund the operation. The

Executive Privilege: Presidential Control Over Information (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974). For a recent attack on the executive privilege concept and upon the St. Clair episode as a precedent, see Raoul Berger, Executive Privilege: A Constitutional Myth (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974). For a general treatment on executive powers, see Edward S. Corwin, The President: Office and Powers, 1787-1957 (New York: New York University Press, 4th ed. rev., 1957).

⁶ Ibid.

fact that no startling revelations flowed from the investigations which could lead to impeachment proceedings should not be construed to mean that such grounds were not sought after by those who initiated the investigation. The purpose of the inquiry was, after all, to determine if grounds for impeachment did indeed exist.

The investigation into the defeat of St. Clair also can be considered as the first in a long series of attempts to level Alexander Hamilton, the leading spokesman for the developing Federalist faction. Congressional opposition to Hamilton had been building since his economic policies were introduced into Congress. The St. Clair episode provided his enemies with the first real chance to bring him down. That they failed did not deter them from going after him again in future months.⁷

The defeat also had far reaching diplomatic effects. The British took the St. Clair defeat to be the signal they had been waiting for to establish once and for all their hegemony over the entire Northwest Territory. The surrender of that territory in 1783 had proven to be one of the biggest diplomatic blunders in English History. Now, in the aftermath of the American defeat, the British attempted to recoup their losses by sponsoring the creation

⁷ See for example: Broadus Mitchell, Alexander Hamilton: The National Adventure, 1788-1804 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), pp.245-286.

of an Indian barrier state. The concept of the neutral Indian state was not new. The uprising of Chief Pontiac following the French-Indian War gave rise to a similar plan on the part of the British. The Proclamation of 1763 had attempted to set up such an Indian reserve. Later, the Quebec Act of 1774 envisioned the establishment of a similar Indian territory. Following the Revolutionary War, as British leaders were beginning to realize the error they made at Paris, the concept of the Indian barrier state was raised once more. However, it was not until the defeat of St. Clair that the British had the temerity to propose the creation of such a state on admittedly American territory. The adamant American refusal to countenance such an idea does not detract from the significance the defeat had had upon the British diplomats. The defeat had apparently shocked the British as much as it had the Americans.⁸

The diplomatic impact upon the American government was also significant. In the wake of the defeat,

⁸ See for example: A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace After the War of 1812 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940); Samuel Flagg Bemis, Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy (New Haven: Yale University Press, rev. ed., 1962); Orpha E. Leavitt, "British Policy on the Canadian Frontier, 1782-1792: Mediation and an Indian Barrier State," Wisconsin Historical Publications, Proceedings, 1915, pp.151-185. For more detailed references on this topic, see chapter three above, especially notes 12-20.

the Americans had launched perhaps the most intensive peace offensive in the history of the nation's Indian negotiations. Emissary after emissary was sent west in an attempt to bring about a settlement. There were several motivating factors behind these American efforts. First, they might deter the Indians from carrying on continuing raids against the frontier. This in turn would relax the pressures upon the government for aid which were flowing from the frontier settlers. Second, the negotiations would allow the army of General Wayne to have more time to prepare its march into the wilderness. Third, the hope was held, though a slim one, that peace might actually result from such negotiations. Finally, the intense criticisms of the nation's Indian policies, both in Congress and the newspapers, forced the Administration into a position of having to convince the people that peace was the true goal of the government.

The impact of St. Clair's defeat on the Administration was further exemplified by the retreats it made from earlier positions in dealing with the Indians. The Administration, in its Indian negotiations following the defeat, admitted for the first time that the Indians did possess the right of the soil. Only after the defeat was the United States willing to admit the earlier errors of American peace commissioners who had claimed that the

right to the soil resided in the United States.

However, these concessions did not appease the Indians. Their victories over the armies of Harmar and St. Clair hardened their positions toward the United States in subsequent negotiations. The Indians were, understandably, filled with a just sense of victory. As a result, they adopted a policy which ultimately would force the United States Army to march against them. The tribes, perhaps feeling themselves invincible, demanded that the American settlers retreat south of the Ohio River and that that line become the permanent boundary between the two peoples. American acceptance of the Ohio River boundary became their sine qua non for negotiations.

This insistence by the Indians proved to be a fatal error for them. The Administration would never relinquish the area north of the Ohio. Not only had much of the area been sold to speculators, but many settlers had already taken up residence north of the River. Any retreat from the region would also have served to shake the confidence of the West in the national government. It was the determination of the Indians to retain the Ohio River boundary which convinced the Administration that the Indian crisis could only be ended by the latter's defeat at the hands of the American Army. Thus, in the face of the Indians refusal to listen to the most liberal

terms the government was willing to offer, the Administration proceeded to order General Wayne's army to march against the Ohio Indian tribes. The all or nothing attitude of the tribes north of the Ohio had sealed their fate. In the absence of any negotiations their defeat at the hands of the United States Army became inevitable. Perhaps their ultimate fate was unavoidable regardless, but an Indian acceptance of the American offers made then in 1793 would have guaranteed them temporarily the northern half of Ohio, and would have delayed the ultimate American take-over of their lands.

The overwhelming impact which the defeat had upon the nation, however, is probably nowhere better exemplified than in the newspapers of the day. Not only were the people deluged with the news of the battle, but more significantly, they were exposed to a detailed political debate over the reasons behind the Administration's prosecution of an Indian War.

The newspapers revealed the great pressure being placed upon the Administration by frontier residents. In the weeks following the defeat, letters and petitions appeared in the press demanding the government take effective action to protect exposed settlements. The speed with which the Administration rushed the bill through Congress creating Anthony Wayne's army reflects the effect that

this pressure had upon the government.

At the same time as these pressures were being brought to bear against the Administration, equal pressures were being brought from a different direction. A common theme in the press was that the Indian War was unjust and immoral. Correspondents truly solicitous of the Indians' rights, condemned their own government's actions. That the Indians had the rights of all mankind was argued often and at length. The nation was being called upon to live up to its own professed ideals of guaranteeing life, liberty and property to all. Thus, while the pressures for war were great, the pressures to achieve a just and peaceful conclusion to the war, through negotiations, were at least equally strong.

The Administration was caught in the middle and responded with a two-sided policy. While sympathetic to the critics of the Indian War, it was forced to face the reality of frontier expansion. Thus, on the one hand the Administration undertook an intensive campaign to achieve a just peace on the frontier through negotiation, while on the other, it rushed the army of General Wayne into a state of preparedness.

A further significance of the debate over the Indian War was to show the existence of an East versus West sectionalism that was emerging in the nation. This

attitude was seen in the Eastern arguments that the West was useless to the nation for the foreseeable future. Others would argue that the frontiersmen themselves were useless and unproductive citizens who constituted a drain on the nation's treasury. The Westerners would counter that such arguments were the products of childish minds. The Easterners were called naive dreamers completely ignorant of the realities of the frontier.

The mass of material flowing daily from the presses attacking the Administration's policy was impressive. While Washington himself was never openly censured, the assaults on his policy convinced him that he was the real target of their barbs. These indirect assaults on Washington, combined with the open attacks on Knox and more particularly Hamilton, give strong evidence of the rapidly developing party lines that were forming by the end of 1791. Nor were these attacks limited to one issue -- the war. Rather they spread out to include the government's treatment of the Indians, its handling of foreign relations with Great Britain and the domestic-economic policies of the Federalists.

The Indian problem during Washington's first Administration was, perhaps, the most important one the nation faced. Certainly, more time was spent on the Indian question in Cabinet meetings than any other issue. St.

Clair's defeat holds a position of paramount importance, therefore, during these years. The fact that more attention has not been paid this event and its repercussions is perhaps due to the fact that historians have concentrated upon more dramatic developments of the era such as the growing crisis in Europe. But the facts are clear.

The establishment of the first congressional investigating committee in the nation's history, the Constitutional precedents consequently established, the evidence found in Congressional and press debate of increasingly strengthening party lines, the diplomatic initiatives provided by British, Indian and American leaders as a result of the defeat, and, the far ranging newspaper debate over the wisdom of Administration Indian policies, all serve to underscore the full significance of the military defeat of Major General Arthur St. Clair on November 4, 1791.

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 22, 1976
Date

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